

## 1837 Immigrants from Norway

Source: History of Norwegian Immigration to The United States From the Earliest Beginning down to the Year 1848 By GEORGE T. FLOM, Ph. D. (Columbia)

Some of the Immigrants of 1837. The First Pathfinders from Numedal and Telemarken.

Besides the 177 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 Telemarken in the south central part of Norway.

Among the immigrants of 1837 were, also, the brothers, Ole and Ansten Nattestad, from Vægli, Numedal, both of whom came via Gothenburg, and Hans Barlien, who emigrated with Enigheden. These men played such a part in the immigration history of the period as to deserve something more than a mere mention.

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, Wisconsin (also extending into Illinois); while Hans Barlien founded the first Norwegian settlement in Iowa, at Sugar Creek, Lee County. Of the circumstances which led to the emigration of the Nattestad brothers, an interesting account appears in *Billed-Magazin*, 1869, pages 82–83. This, which is an interview with Ole Nattestad, has been reprinted in other works and I shall not take the space for it here. We may note, however, that they had received their first news of America upon a journey to the neighborhood of Stavanger in the close of 1836. During Christmas of that year, they were the guests of Even Nubbru in Sigdal, a member of the Storting, and it was his praise of American laws which first aroused Ole Nattestad's desire to emigrate, as he had already had some unpleasant experiences in that respect.

In April, 1837, they stood ready to leave for America, having converted their possessions into cash, a sum of eight hundred dollars. They went on skis from Rollaug to Tin, over the mountains and through the forests to Stavanger. Halsten Halvorson Brække-Eiet, also from Rollaug, became a third member of the party. In Stavanger, local official hostility to emigration led them into difficulties, and they were forced to seek safety in flight by night. They went to Tananger, where they were more successful, a skipper contracting to take them in his yacht to Gothenburg. In Gothenburg, they secured passage with a ship which carried iron from Sweden to Fall River, Massachusetts. The journey lasted thirty-two days. Thence, they went to New York, where they met a few Norwegians, and thence again to Rochester. Here they spoke with several members of the sloop party of 1825, now living in Rochester, and they were, for a short time, the guests of Lars Olson, as so many others of the immigrants of those years. Hearing that those who had come to America in 1836 had gone west to La Salle County, they decided to go

there. In Detroit, Ole Nattestad was one day walking about to view the city, and he says:

Here I accidentally came upon a man, whom I immediately recognized by his clothes as a countryman from the western coast of Norway. I greeted the man, and the meeting was for us both as if two brothers had met after a long separation.

This man was one of the passengers on the Aegir, who had just then arrived in Detroit. The Nattestad party now joined these, all (except N. P. Langeland and family, as we have seen, page 102 above), going west to Chicago. Here they met Björn Anderson Kvelve, whose unfavorable account of the Fox River locality first gave them some doubt as to the wisdom of going there. Of the subsequent events, the reader has already been told. We shall meet again with both Ole and Ansten Nattestad below. Halsten Brække-Eiet later settled in Dodgeville, Wisconsin.

Hans Barlien was from Overgaarden, Trondhjem; he seems to have been the second emigrant to America from that region. Of him there will be occasion to speak more in detail in connection with the first Norwegian settlement in Iowa. I desire, here, however, to mention five others, who came via Gothenburg to America in the same year, namely, Erick Gauteson Midböen, Thore Kittilson Svimbil, and John Nelson Rue, who had large families, and two single men, Gunder Gauteson Midböen and Torsten Ingebrigtsen Gulliksrud. These form the advance troupe of emigrants from the Parish of Tin in Upper Telemarken, a region which furnished a large share of recruits for the pioneer colonies of Wisconsin and Iowa in the forties and the fifties. Thore Svimbil became a pioneer in Blue Mounds, Dane County, where we shall find him later. Erik Gauteson Midböen, who had a large family, settled in La Salle County, but, says our authority, "fortune was not kind to him." He later joined the Latter Day Saints and undertook a journey to Norway as a representative of that church, returned to America and died soon after, about 1850, as near as I can ascertain. Torsten Gulliksrud also settled in Illinois, but died early. John Nelson Rue will appear later in our account as one of the founders of the earliest Norwegian settlement in Winneshiek County, Iowa.

We do not know what the circumstances were that led to the emigration of this little group from Upper Telemarken in 1837. It seems not unlikely that the news of America had come to them through copies of letters from Hovland or others, though they may also have had information more directly through Knud Slogvig's return. The latter does not to me seem so likely, however, for they appear to have made no attempt to secure passage from Stavanger. The departure of this group from Tin does not seem to have had any immediate influence upon emigration from that region. The real exodus from Tin does not begin till 1839, and then as a part of the general movement, but this may have been aided by letters from those who went thence in 1837. The number that in this way took passage via Gothenburg that year may have been larger than we have knowledge of. While the number, two hundred, which our statistics, cited above, gives as that of the emigration from Norway in 1837 is certainly rather low, it is highly improbable that it was as high as three hundred, as elsewhere given. A conservative and

reasonable estimate would seem to place it at about two hundred and forty or fifty.

Among the passengers on the Aegir, we mentioned Nils Fröland. He was one of two, the other being Mons Aadland, to first join Nils P. Langeland in his preparations for emigrating to America. With his wife and children, he located at Beaver Creek, and they were among the fortunate survivors of that colony. In 1839, he moved to Mission Township in La Salle County, and to the present Miller Township the next year. He died there in 1873. His widow (born 1798) was still living in 1895. A grandson, Lars Fruland, resides at Newark, Illinois.

Anders Nordvig, who also came on the Aegir, died in the Beaver Creek Settlement. His widow, a sister of Knud Langeland, moved to La Salle County; she died there at the age of ninety in 1892. A daughter, Malinda, married Iver Lawson (Iver Larson Bö), who came to Chicago from Voss, Norway, in 1844. Victor F. Lawson, owner of The Chicago News, is her son. Another daughter, Sarah (born 1824), married a Mr. Darnell, a pioneer of Benton County, Iowa, in 1854. Mrs. Darnell was the first Norwegian in that county. After Darnell's death, she returned to Illinois, locating at Sandwich, De Kalb County.

Among the passengers on Aegir, Odd Himle, Baard Haugen, Ole Dyvik and John Björge went direct to La Salle County. The first of these returned to Norway in 1844, and, while there, married Marie L. Jermo; he returned to America in 1845, and settled on Spring Prairie in Columbia County, Wisconsin, where we shall meet with him again. He died in De Forest, Dane County, Wisconsin, in May, 1893. We shall also meet John Björge below as one of the pioneers of Koshkonong, Wisconsin. Halle Væte died in Beaver Creek, as did his wife and grown-up daughter. Kolbein Saue and Styrk Saue both went to Beaver Creek and were among the survivors; they came to Koshkonong in 1843 and are to be remembered among the early pioneers there. Styrk Saue was born in Voss, September twenty-fifth, 1814; his wife, Ellen Olson (born Rekve), was born in 1816. They were married in America. Nils Bolstad settled in Koshkonong in 1840. He was one of a group of three to visit Dane County, Wisconsin, on a trip of exploration in the fall of 1839, being, therefore, the first Norwegians in that county.

Among the passengers on Enigheden was Hans Valder and wife. He was born on the farm, Vælde, in Vats Parish in Ryfylke in 1813. Having received an education he taught school in Tysvæer some years before emigrating. Here he heard much about the earliest emigration to America from Stavanger. In Detroit, Valder and Östen Espeland separated from the rest of the party and went to Adrian, Michigan. Thence they went a few miles into the country in Lenawee County to visit a small Norwegian settlement, whither Ingebrigt Larson Narvig had recently moved from Monroe County, where he had settled in 1833.[77] In the spring of 1838 Valder left for La Salle County, Illinois. Here he lived until 1853, when he moved to what is at present Newburg, Fillmore County, Minnesota, and became one of the earliest Norwegian pioneers in Minnesota. Östen Espeland and family remained at the home of Narvig a little longer than Valder, but then they also went to La Salle County.

Another passenger on Enigheden was Christopher Danielson from Aardal, in Lower Ryfylke. He was fifty-seven years old at the time of emigrating, settled in Mission Township, La Salle County, where his wife died a few years later. Danielson died of the cholera in 1849. His son, Christopher Danielson (born in Norway), resides at Sheridan, Illinois. Thomas A. Thompson, born 1812 in Skjold Parish, Ryfylke, settled in Norway, La Salle County, Illinois. In 1867 he removed to Adams County, Iowa, where he died in 1870. Lars Richolson and wife also came in 1837, and settled near Ottawa in La Salle County. Lars Richolson, as, indeed, several of the pioneers of these years, soon became one of the substantial men of the community.[78] Ole Heier, who also came in 1837, from Tin, Telemarken, located in La Salle County. He had been an ardent Haugian, but became a Mormon in Illinois, and later a Baptist. In 1868 he moved to Iowa, where he died in 1873. A son, A. Hayer, lives in Leland, Illinois. Finally there came that year Even Askvig with wife and children from Hjelmeland Parish in Ryfylke. Settling first in Indiana (Beaver Creek) they removed the next year to La Salle County, Illinois. Late in the forties they settled in Texas and at last in 1852 the parents and a part of the family located in southwestern Iowa, where Even Askvig died in 1875 and his wife in 1881.