

## 1839 Immigrants to Missouri

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)

Shelby County, Missouri. Ansten Nattestad's Return from Norway in 1839. The Founding of the Jefferson Prairie Settlement in Rock County, Wisconsin.

Before returning now to the thread of our narrative, I wish to speak briefly of an early effort, and the only one, before the fifties, to found a settlement from the southern point of dispersion.

In 1837 Kleng Pearson, Jacob and Knud Slogvig, Andrew Askeland, Andrew Simonson, Thorstein Thorson Rue, several of whom had families, and about eight others, left La Salle County, went to Missouri and made a settlement in Shelby County; this, however, proved unsuccessful, principally on account of the lack of a market.

Pearson does not seem to have selected a very desirable locality, and he did not possess the steadfastness of purpose that would seem to be a prime requisite in the pioneer. He was too much of a lover of adventure, and hardly was a plan brought to completion before his head was again full of new dreams and fancies.

He was something of a Peer Gynt but without Peer Gynt's selfishness or his eye for the main chance; the roving spirit dominated Pearson wholly; not until old age had laid its hand on him did he yield to the monotony of a settled life; but even then in the wilderness of Texas in the fifties. I have personal information of his life there; he took no part in the upbuilding of the community, no active interest in its progress. In a settled community he alone was unsettled; he was never able to gather himself together into concentrated action and prolonged effort in a definite cause or undertaking. A vagabond citizen, he died in poverty. The only activity we associate with his name is the adventurous wanderings of his youth.

After having spent a year in Missouri Pearson returned to Norway, evidently for the purpose of recruiting his colony, but I have no evidence that he succeeded in this. Independent of Pearson's efforts, the little colony did receive an accession of three in 1838, namely, Knud and Ole Lydvo and Lars Gjerstad, and of one person in the fall of 1839, namely, Nils Lydvo, who had just come from Voss, Norway, with a group of immigrants from that region, most of whom remained in Chicago. The Shelby County settlement did not thrive. It was too far removed from other settlers, too far from a market; the settlers suffered want and became discouraged. The colony was practically broken up in 1840, when most of the settlers removed north into Iowa Territory into what is now Lee County. Here they established the first Norwegian settlement in Iowa. Of this we shall have occasion to speak under the year 1840. Let us now return to Ansten Nattestad and his party of emigrants, whom we left above, page 119, as about to depart for

America.

Ansten Nattestad's party of one hundred then sailed from Drammen by the *Emelia*, Captain Ankerson, late in the spring of 1839. It was the first time, says he, that the people of Drammen had seen an emigrant ship. Every person paid thirty-three dollars and a half (*specie*); they were nine weeks on the ocean, going direct to New York. They took the usual route inland and arrived in Milwaukee just at the time when the Luraas party had returned to Milwaukee to purchase land already selected in Waukesha County, as we have seen above. They urged the new arrivals to stop in Milwaukee and go with them to Muskego, but Nattestad objected, and so they continued their journey to Chicago.

Here Ansten learned that his brother had located in Wisconsin the year before. The party's destination was La Salle County, but this changed the course of some of them. Some who had friends there did go to La Salle County, a few remained in Chicago, especially single men, but the majority went with Ansten to Clinton. All these (excepting some to be noted below) bought land and began the life of pioneers there in the fall of 1839 on what came to be known as Jefferson Prairie. Besides Ole Knudson Nattestad and his brother Ansten, those who founded this settlement were: Halvor Pederson Haugen, Hans Gjermundson Haugen, Thore Helgeson Kirkejord, Torsten Helgeson Kirkejord, Jens Gudbrandson Myhra, Gudbrand, Myhra, Erik Skavlem, the brothers Kittil and Kristoffer Nyhus, and T. Nelson. Halvor Haugen did not come with the Nattestad party, although he was in Drammen intending to sail on the *Emelia*. Owing to lack of room about thirty persons, including children, had to be left behind. Halvor Haugen has himself told (in *Amerika*, September, 1907) of the coming of these. After several days of waiting, they secured passage on a boat bound for Gothenburg, Sweden. The journey went via Fredrikshald, where another stay of two or three days took place. At Gothenburg a wait of ten days followed before the brig *Bunyan*, on which they were to sail, was ready. "It was certainly fortunate," says our narrator, "that people were not in such haste then, or the repeated delays of several days duration would have been the cause of much unpleasant irritation." Landing in Boston, the immigrants travelled by rail to Providence, Rhode Island, thence by steamboat to New York. Here they boarded the boat which was to carry them to Albany. As they were told the boat was not to leave before five o'clock in the afternoon most of the men of the party went ashore again to purchase food. When they returned however the boat had sailed having left at ten in the forenoon instead of five in the afternoon as planned. Those left behind managed to reach their destination also, though with many difficulties and unpleasant experiences. From Albany they travelled by canal to Buffalo. "Of this part of the journey," says Haugen, "there is nothing to be said except that, like all other earthly things, this also at last came to an end." From Buffalo the journey went by steamboat to Chicago. They did not go thence to La Salle County though undoubtedly intended originally to do so. I do not know what changed their course, but on the next day after arriving in Chicago, they went to Du Page County, Illinois, where a week later they met those who had gone with Nattestad in Captain Ankerson's ship. The party whose coming has thus briefly been related was composed of Halvor

Haugen, wife, three sons, Peder, Halvor and Andreas, and two daughters Bergit and Sigrid; Halvor Stordok, Lars Haugerud, Gunder Fingalpladsen, Engebret Sæter, Lars Dalen, Gjermund Johnson, and Sven Tufte, all of whom also had families, besides some single persons. Halvor Haugen's family and most of the party remained in Du Page County for a time, and Peder Haugen and his brother Andreas and the two sisters secured employment there. The father, however, went with Erik Skavlem to Jefferson Prairie to help him build a house. At Christmas the rest of the party also went to Jefferson Prairie. During the winter they all lived in Skavlem's house. This house is described as follows:

"It was sixteen by sixteen and quite low. In order to add to room 'crowns' were erected overhead, that is, beams which were laid crosswise near the ceiling. These beams were cut pointed at the ends which were made to rest between the logs in the walls on either side, like riders across the house. On top of these again was laid flats, on which beds were arranged. Down below on the floor there were also three beds."

A writer in Amerika, March first, 1907, quotes one of the immigrants as speaking of the cramped quarters in the log cabin, in which the whole party lived that fall and winter; room which to one family would seem too small now. "How these settlers," he says, "could manage in one log cabin a whole winter is a riddle to me." The following spring Halvor Haugen also built a cabin which was always full as newcomers were constantly arriving. At the same time other cabins were erected by Kittil and Kristoffer Nyhus, Gudbrand and Jens Myhra, and Torsten Kirkejorden. Two years later all of these built new and more commodious houses.

The settlement thus founded exclusively by immigrants from the district of Numedal has always continued to be recruited largely from that region (see, however, below). In the following year a few more families came from Numedal, while from 1841 the accessions were considerable every year for a number of years. Among these is to be mentioned Bergit Nelson Kallerud, from Vægli, who also came in the ship Emilia, in 1839, but who does not seem to have gone directly to Jefferson Prairie. She married Jens Gudbrandson Myhra at Christmas, 1839, while his brother, Gudbrand Myhra, married Ambjör Olson (also from Vægli) in 1840. The following year they, however, moved to the Rock Prairie Settlement (see below), and in 1852 they settled in Mitchell County, Iowa. In connection with the settling of this county we shall have occasion to speak again more fully of them. Jens Myhra was born in Vægli, Numedal, in 1812.

Of the other founders of this settlement I may here add the following facts. Ole Knudson Nattestad was born at Vægli, in Rollaug Parish, December twenty-fourth, 1807. We have above given an account of his settling at Clinton. In Nordlyset for May eighteenth, 1848, there appeared a communication from Nattestad relative to this occasion, in which he rightly claims to have been the first Norwegian to settle in the state. He married there Lena Hiser in 1840; he lived in the settlement, as an influential, respected member of the community, till his death, which occurred at Clinton, May twenty-eighth, 1886. His wife died in September, 1888. They

left seven children; Henry Nattestad, the oldest, at present occupies the homestead. The other children are, Charles (Sioux Falls, South Dakota), James (Dakota), Ann (Clinton), Julia (Mrs. Martin Scofftedt Lawrence, Kansas), Caroline (Mrs. Louis O. Larson, Clinton), and Eliza (Clinton). Ansten Nattestad was born August twenty-sixth, 1813, the youngest of three brothers. Ole was the next oldest.

Their father, Knud Nattestad, was a man of some means, but by the right of primogeniture, the oldest inherited the estate and he remained in Norway. Of these things and the early life of the two younger brothers, Ole Nattestad gives an account in an interview printed in *Billed-Magazin*, 1869, where also is a detailed account of Ansten Nattestad's coming to America with his group of one hundred immigrants in 1839. He also there, pages 107–108, gives a description of the settlement as it was in 1869, and he has elsewhere in the columns of that magazine made important contributions to the immigration history of the years 1838–1840, which now are among the original sources of material for a history of Norwegian immigration. Relative to the further career of Ansten Nattestad I shall only add here that he became one of the substantial members of this great and growing settlement, in which he continued to live until his death on April eighth, 1889.

Hans G. Haugen was born at Vægli in Rollaug Parish in 1785. He was an old soldier, having been in the Norwegian-Swedish War of 1814, and having served in the Norwegian army for seven years. His wife, whose maiden name was Sigrid Pedersdatter Valle, was born in January, 1803. The family consisted further of two sons, Gunnul and Gjermund, the former born at Vægli, April twenty-eighth, 1827, the latter on September nineteenth, 1836. The father, Hans Haugen, lived only a year after coming to America; he died in October, 1840. In 1849 the widow and two sons moved to Primrose, Dane County, Wisconsin, where we shall meet with them again. Sigrid Haugen died in Beloit in 1885. It may be added here that the family took the name of Jackson in this country. Of the circumstances that led to the adoption of this name the son gives an account which appeared in *Anderson's First Chapter*, etc., page two hundred sixty-three.

Thore Helgeson Kirkejord<sup>[83]</sup> was born September twelfth, 1812; married in 1837. They had one daughter, Christie, born 1849, and who is married to Gunder Larson.<sup>[84]</sup> Thore Helgeson died in Clinton in 1871. Christopher C. Nyhus (Newhouse) was born at Vægli in July, 1812. When he came to Clinton Township he first entered claim to forty acres of land, which was later increased to a hundred sixty. He married a daughter of Halvor Halvorson in the fall of 1843. They had five children, Christopher, who died in infancy, Oliver, Christopher 2d, Torrena (Mrs. Gustav Nelson, Clinton), and Christiana. T. Nelson settled on section twenty in 1839; he married Rachel Gilbertson that year. They had five children. The son, T. T. Nelson, married Mary Tangen of Manchester, Illinois, in 1872. They have two daughters, Anna R. (b. 1875), Gertine (b. 1878).