

La Salle County, Illinois *p. 13-14*

Next after the previously mentioned settlement in Orleans County, N. Y. comes the Fox River settlement in La Salle Co., Ill. This was founded in 1834 by a part (and as mentioned, the larger part) of the Sloopers people, who did not like the aforementioned place. They came westward - with Kleng Person as leader. Kleng was, at least, the one who had investigated the land for them and stayed in their midst for a long time. Just as he was the man who started the emigration from Norway, he was also the first Norwegian who set foot on America's inland. Not only that, he paved the way as far west as Illinois - he also paved the way to Iowa and other states, that we will come to later. Kleng Persen's sister, Mrs. Cornelius Nelson Hersdal, whose husband died in Kendall in 1833 - her house was the first to be built in the Fox River settlement. It was, however, just a poor log cabin, though Mrs. Hersdal and her family were satisfied with it. It still stands - beside today's large, modern buildings.

But back to the emigration from Norway. Among those who started it, one must mention Knud Anderson Slogvig and Gjert Gregoriussen Hovland. When Slogvig had been in America for 10 years (he emigrated with the Sloop, 1825), he made a visit to his home community in Skjold parish, Stavanger Amt, where he was met with great interest. There were many who came (some from far away) to see and speak to 'The American'. And it looked like the Sloopers over there, soon would have Norwegian neighbors.

Hovland did not go home, but he was a diligent writer - both during his stay at the Kendall settlement, N. Y. and after his arrival in Fox River. He gave a rather plain message about the conditions and future prospects in America, they made copies of them and disseminated them in Vestland communities - right from Bergen to Kristiansand.

As a consequence of Hovland's and other letters and Slogvig's visit, about 200 persons (mainly from Bergen, Haugesund and Stavanger) emigrated in 1836. They sailed from the latter city for New York aboard two brigs, 'Norden' and 'Den Norske Klippe' that had been outfitted for emigrant transport. The following year (1837) two other ships sailed, the 'Enigheden' from Stavanger and 'Ægir' from Bergen with a similar number of emigrants, of whom, most were from Vestland communities while a few had come from Telemarken, Nummedal and Trøndelagen.

Most of those who emigrated in 1836 and 1837 came directly to Illinois - some to Fox River, some to Beaver Creek and in a few cases to Chicago. Only a few stopped at the Kendall settlement, N. Y., but they also moved west to Illinois rather quickly.

(The continuation of emigration story will be done below, after we come to those places or areas that benefited from it. I must, therefore draw attention to several other things, since the material is divided countywide. In other words, I

must pay attention to what belongs in the county where I find myself at the moment, before I jump to another.)

Elling Eielsen, who came from Norway to Fox River in 1839, immediately began holding meetings there and a meeting house was erected that year. This was the first Norwegian meeting house in America. It was later used as a church. The aforementioned was urged by some of his friends to get ordained as a priest. The ordination was conducted by F. A. Hoffman, D.D., a German Lutheran priest at Duncan's Grove (at Chicago) on the 3rd October 1843. However, Elling preferred to be seen as a lay preacher, which actually he was - in the mode of Hans Nilsen Hauge. He was a zealous and skilled preacher - and was nearly always on the road - with his axe, compass, coffee pot, rain clothes etc. Many a night he slept under open skies, often surrounded by Indians, to whom he was a good friend. He visited many a lonely Norwegian with the Word, and he took part in many a battle (in the clerical sense) and was an example during his long efforts in the Norwegian settlements in America. He was born in Voss the 19th September 1804 and died in Chicago, Ill. in 1883.

According to the statistics I have gathered in 1900 for 'Norge i Amerika', there were 14 churches and 16 congregations in La Salle Co., 10 of them belonging to The United Church, 4 to The Methodist Church, 1 to Hauge's Synod and 1 to The Evangelical Free Church.

In the Fox River settlement, which was certainly the first permanent Norwegian settlement in America, they began introducing Norwegian place names. Fairly early a post office with the named Norway was established and another called Stavanger, because a large number of the first settlers came from that area. Stavanger P. O. was recently closed because of the free mail delivery (R.F.D.), but Norway still exists.

A. A. Klove from Voss, was the first Norwegian to hold a public position in this county. For further information about him and others see the section, 'Norwegians in official positions in America', later in the book.'

For an account about 'Kirketidende' that was published (first in Leland, later in Norway) and about 'Illinois Posten' that is now published in Ottawa in this county, see the section, 'Norwegian-American newspapers and periodicals)

And for information about Pleasant View Lutheran College, the Norwegian school on Ottawa, see, 'Norwegian-American teaching institutions'.

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