

Translated from 'Nordmændene i Amerika' by Martin Ulvestad
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Clay County, Minnesota p. 87

Ole Thompson from Aal, Hallingdal was the first Norwegian in this county. He came from St. Ansgar, Ia. and settled at Holy Cross, Minn. in 1869. (His address now is Kurtz, Minn.)

Later in the year came P. Røkken from Sogn and Bernt Anderson from Hedemarken. The latter settled at Hickson N.D., right across from Ole Thompson - on the other side of the Red River. Narve Moen also came about this time. They began to grow wheat and oats, but they had to go all the way to Alexandria to sell their products and to obtain necessities. "The oxen had to scurry along, you can be sure."

The first Norwegians in the vicinity of Rollag and Hawley were Martin Olsen from Beitstaden, N. Trondhjem's Amt and Johannes Tetli from Frosten, they came from Winneshiek Co., Ia. in 1870. Right after them came Tom Gundersen from Moland, Telemarken, Claus Olsen, similarly from Telemarken, Petrus P. Solum from Namsos, Sevrin P. Solum from the same place, Erik Hansen, Tov Herbrandsen and Torsten Arneson, the last three from Rollag, Nummedalen, A. Rusfelt from Finmarken, Knut O. Myrbø from Telemarken and Jørgen ?? from Toten. About the same time came John O. Tansem from Eidsvold, Amund Røgle from Nannestad and Iver Ranum from Opdal. Tansem settled in the area where a P.O. bears his name. Røgle and Ranum settled closer to Norwegian Grove.

In the vicinity of Stockwood, Martin Thomson was the first. He settled her in 1870 or '71. It was a long time before the iron horse puffed across the prairie. However, they could see Indians travel back and forth and sometimes they would visit a home, frightening the women and children. What a difference from then and now! Now there are rolling fields, splendid houses, railway stations, schools and churches everywhere - and it was the Norwegians, more than anyone else, that have built this great change. The grasshoppers and the Indians who had sworn to drive the Vikings to flight, had to flee themselves. It was in the 70s that the control struggle took place in Clay County.

One of the old settlers gives an example about how the mosquitoes pestered them, "I was going to town to get some provisions," he says, "but since I did not know this area, I got lost on the return trip just as dusk fell. Thus, I could not drive further. It was warm and humid and the air was fully packed with mosquitoes, so that I could not open my mouth without filling my mouth with them. My horse rolled and foamed from pain and sought to break away from me. I tried to change things by lying down and rolling but I suffered just as much. I will never forget that night's torture. For several days my body was terribly swollen from the mosquito poison."

Grong Norwegian Evangelical Congregation, that was established at Rollag in 1872 by Pastor B. Hagbø, belonging to The Conference, was the first Norwegian congregation in the county. Now there are 20 Norwegian congregations and 17

churches, 11 belonging to The United Church, 4 to The Norwegian Synod, 4 to The Lutheran Free Church and 1 to the Adventists.

The first Norwegian to hold public office in the county was John Thorsgaard from Gudbrandsdalen, he was elected County Treasurer in 1876.

Peter E. Thompson of Barnesville was the first to be elected as a member of the State Legislature (in 1890).

Norwegian place names (Townships and post offices) in Clay County; Kragness, Lund, Hitterdal, Viding, Moland, Rollag, Hagen, Morken and Tansem.

Concordia College, a Norwegian school, was started in the Moorhead in 1891.

The newspaper 'Nye Nordmanden' appeared in the latter city in 1894 and a short time later 'Dagen' was begun.

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PLEASE NOTE: The Buffalo River Settlement is not mentioned in Ulvestad's history. However, **Kragnes** (Aanund Kragnes), **Moland** (Moland, Telemark), and **Morken** (Torgrim Morken) townships all were named by Norwegian immigrants associated with the Buffalo River Settlement. The village of Rollag is located in Parke township. Viding township was actually named by for a Swedish settler there. Skree township is missing from Ulvestad's list; it was named by for Mikkel Skree, a Norwegian who was the first resident of the township.

