CHAPTER 9

Land-taking and Community Building in Wisconsin, 1846–1860

Terje Mikael Hasle Joranger Anno Museum and Inland University of Applied Sciences

Abstract: This is a case study about the involvement of Norwegian immigrants in the society-building process in Springdale Township in Wisconsin from the period of early immigration in 1848 until 1861. Hailing from various regions in a more or less homogeneous society, Norwegian immigrants in America were part of a multicultural society where they took part in the building of new communities alongside members of other ethnic groups. The study tests their presence in relation to Mary Louise Pratt's concept of contact zones and Peter Sahlins' concept of boundaries. Norwegians cooperated with members of other ethnic groups on various occasions in society but also established ethnic enclaves and cultivated ethnic traditions.[1]

Keywords: migration, ethnicity, multiculturalism, indigenous, settlement

1 Barth 1998

Citation: Joranger, T. M. H. (2023). Land-taking and Community Building in Wisconsin, 1846–1860. In C. Kaveh, H. E. Tafjord & O. Teige (Eds.), *Kontaktsoner og grenseområder. Interaksjon, konflikt og samarbeid i Norden, Midtøsten og Midtvesten ca. 1520–2020* (Chap. 9, pp. 211–229). Cappelen Damm Akademisk. https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.206.ch9

The great westward movement and the settling of the vast North American continent was praised by historian Frederick Jackson Turner. Three years following the closing of the American frontier as declared by the superintendent of the census in 1890, he wrote his ground-breaking *Frontier Thesis*. Here, he praised the extensive territory known as the frontier as the grounds on which European immigrants were assimilated and molded into a mixed race of Americans. Especially visible in the vast expanses of the Midwest, its most important effect was the promotion of American democracy in the US.[2] Frederick Jackson Turner influenced generations of historians labeled by the common term Neo-Turnerians who, until the 1960s, regarded the frontier as a place where different nationalities were molded into one form. The Neo-Turnerians stated that the most important effect of the frontier was the promotion of American democracy, social equality, freedom of opportunity, and individual enterprise.[3]

As a contrast to Turner's focus upon the environment and the assimilationist influence of the frontier upon settlers, historian Jon Gjerde focuses on the relationship between land and people. Gjerde claims that the vast opportunities to own land enabled ethnic communities to segregate and to transplant cultural patterns that went along with the expansion of the nation.[4] Gjerde discusses the interaction between cultural patterns, or mindsets, that migrants from Europe and the northeastern US brought when they settled in the west, which included the vast stretches of land in the Upper Midwest, in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, he states that the stretches of land promoted ethnic cohesiveness and segregation among ethnic and religious groups. As immigrant traditions were carried westward by migration chains that linked people and cultural traditions across space, they were reformulated in the west where immigrants lived in culturally defined settlements centered on ethnic institutions that refabricated a foundation for social ties as they created a forum where they could retain their faith.[5]

Furthermore, the fabric of ethnic settlements in many cases was based on regional and even more local ties based on the local community or parish level in defined regions in Europe. This pattern of migration was often based on kinship, and settling close to family members or other immigrants

2 Turner 1920
3 Gjerde 1999: 40–65
4 Gjerde 1997: 1–22
5 Gjerde 1993: 35, 41

hailing from the same local community represented a safety net in new surroundings.[6] For example, Norwegian individuals and families settling in one locale could consist of immigrants with various regional origins. Non-Norwegian neighbors, however, would probably regard these various regional groups as Norwegians.

The dichotomy between Turner's *Frontier Thesis* and Gjerde's focus on land and people is relevant to this study. Norwegian immigrants hailed from settled communities that dated back more than a thousand years and had to start anew in new surroundings in the US. This implies an adaptation process in which they were exposed to a new language, new customs, legislation and, in total, to a new worldview. The adaptation process and encounters between ethnic groups in settlement areas also implies the formation of a new dynamic between the individuals involved. This process is relevant to Peter Sahlins' use of *boundaries*, a term that describes contact zones in a frontier region between states, peoples and cultures.[7] In this case study, mutual cooperation between various migrant groups was significant in the process of community formation on the frontier. This view may be regarded as complementary to Frederick Jackson Turner's emphasis on the mingling and cooperation of cultures on the frontier as a basis for the development of American characteristics tied to democracy, individualism, and social equality.

Gjerde's focus upon the interaction between cultural patterns among settlers who settled the vast stretches of land in the Upper Midwest may be connected to the concept *contact zones* presented by Mary Louise Pratt. She employs the concept to define "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power".[8] The concept is useful in settler societies where land-taking is an essential part of society building.

This presentation is a case study that focuses on community formation in the township of Springdale in southwestern Wisconsin in the Upper Midwest. The time period ranges from 1848, when Wisconsin was admitted into the Union, until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. The time period represents the first stage of Norwegian overseas migration and the first and second waves of white settlement in Wisconsin.[9] The township

6 Ostergren 1988; Kamphoefner 1987
7 Sahlins 1989: 1–9
8 Pratt 1991: 34
9 Ostergren & Vale 1997: 139–144

was settled by different ethnic groups where Norwegian immigrants made up a significant proportion of the population.

Traditionally, historiography on Norwegian immigration to the US has grappled with the cultural development of Norwegian immigrants and their offspring.[10] In recent decades, migrant scholars have focused more on interactions between Norwegians and other cultural groups in the US.[11] Pratt's use of *contact zones* and Sahlins' use of *boundaries* provide relevant concepts in the discussion on the degree of interaction between Norwegian immigrants and other cultural groups in settlement areas in the Upper Midwest.

Springdale Township

Between 1825 and 1930, more than 850,000 people emigrated from Norway to America. This number made Norway the largest emigrant country in proportion to its population with the exception of Ireland in the nineteenth century.[12] Norway was predominantly rural during the nineteenth century, and a large number of emigrants settled in rural districts in America. Norwegians were the most rural of any nineteenth century immigrant group. According to the 1900 Federal Census, Norwegians were the most rural of any nineteenth-century; only a little more than a quarter of the approximately 337,000 Norwegian-born persons in the US resided in towns with more than 25,000 inhabitants. It was the lowest percentage for any European immigrant group.[13] Norwegian immigration to Wisconsin began in the decade between 1840 and 1850. According to the 1850 Federal Census, almost 9,000 Norwegians were living in the state out of a total of 12,678. By 1860, the 21,442 Norwegians made up about half of Wisconsin's total population.[14]

Springdale Township, the area of study in this chapter is situated in Dane County in southwestern Wisconsin. A few miles west of the township boundary two hills rise above the surrounding plains. With an altitude of about 1,700 feet (about 600 meters) above sea level, they form characteristic features in this region. The hills are referred to as the Blue Mounds, as the

10 See, for example, Lovoll 1997, 1999.
11 Gjerde 1997; Anderson & Blanck 2012; Hansen 2013
12 Lovoll 1997: 10–11
13 Lovoll 1992: 1–2
14 Schafer1932: 226

haze makes them look blue from a distance. According to the journalist and author of note, Albert O. Barton,

> The Indians believed that to drink from its great spring near the top was to obtain passage to the happy hunting grounds, (…) the "roaring of the mounds", which is sometimes heard, they attributed to spirits within the mountain.[15]

Characterized by a mixture of rolling land and prairie, the surroundings bear a resemblance to a park landscape. The settlement area that stretches for several miles south of the Mounds, largely settled by Norwegian immigrants, has therefore been referred to as the Blue Mounds settlement. Upon the arrival of American-born and European colonizers in the 1840s, the township of Springdale was covered by oak and swampy areas. The central and southern part of the township consisted of prairie land.[16]

According to a history published in 1948, the first Norwegian immigrants arrived in Springdale Township in 1846. The party originated in Tinn in Telemark and had emigrated from Norway between 1837 and 1845. Several of the Tinn emigrants were related and had previously lived in the Muskego settlement in eastern Wisconsin. In 1848 and the following years, a number of immigrants from Valdres, Sogn, and Hallingdal settled in Springdale Township. A regional diversity within the national group thus developed from the very beginnings of settlement.[17]

The settlers followed a common pattern among land-hungry immigrants in the US; the first immigrants to reach a location attracted other immigrants from the same location in their home society to settle nearby. Some of them had resided in older settlements where land was taken up and who saw the rise in land prices. As this caused difficulties for newcomers to get established, a group would pull up their stakes and migrate farther west. Here they would search for cheap public land where they could establish a new home. By sending letters to their home community in Norway, they would hope to be joined by family members and neighbors tied together by kinship and a common local culture. In this manner, immigrants with similar regional backgrounds in Europe created a chain

15 Barton 1929: 2
16 Ligowsky 1861
17 Holand 1908: 186; Svalestuen 1972: 316–330; Pope 1948: 111

of settlements based on kinship and common cultural traits from local communities in Norway.[18]

The formation of compact settlements is a characteristic trait among rural Norwegian immigrants. Land-hungry immigrants would choose to settle among their own kin and acquaintances from Norway, and Springdale Township was no exception. Norwegians settled in the northwestern portion of the township. Immigrants from the British Isles, including England, Scotland, and Ireland, settled in the northeastern part of Springdale, immigrants from the German states settled in the southern part, whereas there were sprinklings of American-born citizens south and east of the Norwegians.[19] By 1880, Norwegians made up 45.2 percent of the population in Springdale. Immigrants from the British Isles accounted for 20.5 percent, immigrants from the German states 13.7 percent, whereas American-born citizens made up 11.3 percent of the township's population.[20]

The "myth of empty land"

Various books on Wisconsin history have emphasized how white men "discovered" rivers, mounds, and forests within the present-day boundaries of the state in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Early literature on the history of Wisconsin and the surrounding area rarely mentions the existence of American Indian cultures and their contributions to the development of the region prior to white colonization and settlement.

Prior to the arrival of European settlers, several Native American tribes lived in present-day Wisconsin. The Ho-Chunks (or Hochungra), earlier referred to as the Winnebago, and the Dakota (Sioux) lived in the north, while the Menominee, the Ojibwe, and the Potawatomi lived in the northeastern, central, and southern portions of the state. The Ho-Chunks and the Dakota formed communities and belonged to the Siouan language group, while the latter tribes were Algonquian speakers.[21] The participation of the Ho-Chunks in the fur trade and the presence of lead deposits on their land left them vulnerable to white traders and lead miners. Archeologists believe that they originated in the lower Mississippi Valley and entered present-day Wisconsin a long time before they had contact with white people. They

18 Gjerde 1985: 140–143
19 Ligowsky: 1861
20 Joranger 2008: 189
21 Lowe 2001: 8

are recorded as having lived in the northern part of the state, but due to a variety of reasons they later moved southward.[22] Native American territory in southwestern Wisconsin contained large mineral deposits of lead and zinc, and is referred to as the Lead District. Written reports state that Native Americans were engaged in mining during the eighteenth century. Lead mining became profitable, which attracted people from regions farther east. The Wisconsin mines became attractive due to good facilities for transportation and opportunities for producing food.[23] By the mid-1820s, more than 10,000 miners had illegally entered Native American territory, and the Ho-Chunk together with many other tribes signed several treaties with the Federal Government in the 1820s and 1830s. By 1837, the Ho-Chunk tribe had ceded all of their land east of the Mississippi River to the Federal Government and were removed from their homelands. Some Ho-Chunks refused to move, while others moved farther west and then returned. In 1875, the Ho-Chunk could claim homesteads of up to 80 acres each instead of living on a tribal reservation and, in 1881, Congress passed special legislation which allowed the Ho-Chunk people residing in Wisconsin 40-acre homesteads.[24]

The so-called Black Hawk War in 1832 affected the Ho-Chunk, and the war called attention to the prospect of agricultural land.[25] The war started when a chief named Black Hawk from the Sauk tribe, a neighboring tribe to the Ho-Chunk, refused to relocate his tribe to another location. The US Army and militias pursued his warriors and finally massacred them near the Mississippi River. A number of the Ho-Chunk people had lent their support to Black Hawk, and the Ho-Chunk were forced to cede a large portion of their land in exchange for lands west of the Mississippi River, first in Iowa and Minnesota, and then in South Dakota.[26] An influx of miners arrived after the authorities of the US acquired land from the Native American claimants of the land during the early decades of the nineteenth century. Ebenezer Brigham, who established a lead mine at Blue Mounds a few miles east of Springdale Township in 1828, is credited as being the first white settler in Dane County. The Wisconsin Territory was established in 1836, and twelve years later the territory was admitted into the Union.[27]

22 Lurie 2022: 12–13; Lowe 2001: 42–43
23 Schafer 1932: 34–42
24 Lurie 2022: 6–7; Lowe 2001: 43–48
25 Keyes 1906: 18–19, 25–27
26 Lurie 2022: 6–7; Lowe 2001: 43–48
27 Keyes 1906: 29

After 1850, agricultural resources in the region received more attention, thus marking the beginning of agriculture in southwestern Wisconsin. The importance of mining dwindled in comparison to farming.[28]

The Indian Removal Act was signed into law by President Jackson in 1830 and the subsequent forced relocation of Native Americans to territories west of the Mississippi River was followed up by legislation that encouraged white settlement. The Preemption Act of 1841 and later the Homestead Act of 1862 gave individuals the opportunity to purchase tracts of land after the indigenous population had been removed to reservations and the land left empty. According to historian Betty Bergland, "the so-called 'empty-land theory' also kept immigrants ignorant of mechanisms by which indigenous peoples lost their lands."[29]

The myth of empty lands as experienced by white settlers is prevalent in early county history books of the state of Wisconsin. These books usually include a general history of the county but also have a short history of the various townships in the county. An early history book on Dane County published in 1877 focuses on the arrival of white settlers and the development of systems of government and education, in addition to the existence of businesses, post offices, and churches. The only mention of American Indiansin the presentation of Springdale Township is a reference to three mounds that may have been made by "an ancient people, who are supposed to have inhabited this county prior to its occupancy by the Indian races."[30]

A history of Dane County written in 1906 mentions the presence of Ho-Chunks in the region in relation to a detailed account of the Black Hawk War and the removal of members of the tribe. The history barely includes other references to Ho-Chunks.[31] The lack of reference to Native Americans in early publications of history has a parallel in America letters that Norwegian immigrants sent back home to relatives and friends in their country of origin. Most letters exclude any mention of other ethnic groups, including Native Americans.[32]

The limited reference to indigenous peoples and the emphasis on white settlement reflects the ideal nation-building process formulated by Thomas Jefferson in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, written in 1785. Here, he

28 Gregory 1932: 37–38, 48, 54–55; Schafer 1932: 58, 137
29 Bergland 2021: 22
30 McPherson 1877: 306–312
31 Keyes 1906: 25–27, 42–51
32 Joranger 2016: 42–43

characterized the farmers as "the chosen people of God".[33] In 1790 the US Congress enacted the Nationality Act, the first act to define eligibility for citizenship by naturalization. The Act defined procedures on how to become a US citizen and Congress limited this right to "free white persons".[34] The emphasis on society building also resonates with the concept of *Manifest Destiny* coined by journalist John L. O'Sullivan in 1845. He asserted that Americans had a divine mission to conquer the entire North American continent to expand freedom. According to historian Eric Foner, the notion of freedom and its tie to the availability of land dates farther back in time, but the open stretches of land in the west became increasingly a significant symbol of freedom among Americans.[35]

Despite the fact that the US authorities displaced the Ho-Chunks prior to the arrival of white settlers, source material from early settlers shows evidence of encounters between American Indians and the settlers. Families of Native Americans spent some time in the vicinity but later left. T. S. Spaanem, a resident of Springdale Township of Norwegian heritage, wrote an article with the title "My experience with the Indians" which was published in the *Centennial History of the Township of Springdale* in 1948. Here he mentions several encounters which initially were based on fear toward the American Indians but which eventually turned to a sense of curiosity and an interest to learn more about them. This change in attitude took place when he started to interact with a boy his own age:

> I used to play with some boys near [the farmhouse where the parochial school was held]. The father of the boys was named Ole Gordon. One Sunday afternoon I walked over there to visit with two of his sons, very much my own age. This time I got there and there was an Indian boy about our size. That winter there was an Indian family lived in a tent in John Malone's woods […], so that boy had lived there that winter so he was well acquainted with these two other boys. When I got there we started to play ball. After a while we started to wrestle. Now I can't remember who was the champion wrestler, or who was the champion ballplayer, only one thing I can remember, who could run the fastest. I never saw anything like that Indian boy. He could almost follow the batted ball. I am sorry that I didn't go up into that tent. It got too late for me for I had to go through some woods, and later the Indians moved away so I lost the opportunity.[36]

33 Jefferson 1788: 175
34 Immigration and Ethnic History Society 2019
35 Foner 2011: 352, 493–494
36 Pope 1948: 62–64

According to another observer, encounters between residents in Springdale Township and the indigenous population were rare, but the boy mentioned in T. S. Spaanem's story probably belonged to a family of Ho-Chunks who returned to the old family grounds. He and his family came to Springdale on a regular basis to spend winters "for a dozen years or more", and they would always camp near a little ravine near the Malone cheese factory and the Malone school. The observer also mentioned that some residents became rather well-acquainted with the children, and the boys went hunting together. Yet, there is evidence that the Ho-Chunk family to a large extent kept to themselves.[37]

The citizenship of Native Americans had been debated on various occasions since the drafting of the US Constitution in 1787. Those American Indians who were taxed could become citizens, but this number was very limited. By 1870, only 25,731 of a total of 313,712 Native Americans in the US were eligible to become citizens. This applied to only 8 percent of Native Americans.[38] They attained full birthright citizenship in 1924.[39]

The encounters between Norwegian settlers and the indigenous population of the region may be connected to Mary Louise Pratt's concept of *contact zones*.[40] Norwegians and members of the Ho-Chunk tribe met on equal terms according to the narratives mentioned, but officially the two groups were parts of a context with very different relations of power. As white European immigrants, Norwegians were wanted and accepted as good Americans by the US authorities. Along with other northern Europeans, they enjoyed the benefits of becoming American citizens. The indigenous population, on the other hand, were marginalized in American society; they were not regarded as American citizens, and they did not enjoy the benefits derived from American citizenship. The voices of Indigenous populations have been silent in Norwegian settler narratives from the Upper Midwest. The difference between the positive attitude put forward by the Norwegian-American Spaanem toward the Ho-Chunk and the formal subordinate position of the indigenous population in the US is striking.

37 Pope 1948: 73–76
38 Collins 2006
39 National Constitution Center 2022
40 Pratt 1991

Building a new society

Society building in newly colonized areas was regulated by legislation that had been passed several decades earlier. The Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 were two important pieces of legislation that paved the way for settlement of the Upper Midwest. According to the provisions of the Ordinance of 1785, surveyors would divide all government-owned land into townships of six miles square. The creation of townships by federal law was carried out for the purpose of making available identifiable and saleable tracts of land to individuals. The American rectangular land survey as stipulated in the Ordinance of 1785 was influenced most of all by rectangular town plat maps, based on the Roman centurion system and the thirty-six-square-mile township in medieval England.[41] According to the same Ordinance of 1785, a lot in every township was reserved for the maintenance of a public school. In addition, lots numbered 8, 11, 25, and 29 were to be reserved for the US government.[42] The first schoolhouse within the boundaries of Springdale Township was built near the town of Mount Vernon in the southern portion of the township in 1851.[43]

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 prepared the ground for westward expansion, but also framed the legal and political boundaries for future generations. First, it created the body of land called the Northwest Territory, with the provision that it eventually be carved into new territories. Second, it established the stages through which each territory was to become a state and how it was to be governed. Finally, a section of the Ordinance contained a bill of right that, among others, guaranteed the people of the Northwest Territory freedom of worship and privileges.[44]

Jon Gjerde has suggested that the stretches of land in the US promoted ethnic cohesiveness in which members of various ethnic groups belonged to parallel spheres. This perspective is relevant to our area of study. On the one hand, the Norwegians who settled in Springdale Township from the 1840s participated in the society-building process along with other settlers. When the township was founded in 1848, John Ingebrigtsen Berge was elected as one of the twenty-one officers.[45] Norwegians were also included on poll lists for general elections and militia lists in the township. Later,

41 Johnson 1976: 27–28
42 Johnson 1976: 21–36, 40–46, 116; Billington 1960: 147, 207–208
43 Pope 1948: 17, 69
44 Curti 1959: 261
45 In this context, an officer is the holder of a public office. Keyes 1906: 391.

they established businesses in local towns including Mount Horeb and became involved in political affairs.[46] Local elections became an arena for Norwegians to learn about American politics. The township was made up of a relatively large group of Norwegians, who were potential voters for those who wanted to run for office. As time went by, Norwegians had the experience of challenging non-Norwegians. For more than twenty years, Gilbert Gilbertson, a Norwegian-American, was involved in rivalry with J. R. Henderson, an Anglo-American, for the office of assessor.[47] The involvement in local politics may be tied to Mary Louise Pratt's concept of contact zones, especially in terms of "asymmetry of power". As immigrants, Norwegians were subordinate compared to Anglo-American groups. As founders of the American Republic and the engineers of the legal foundations of society, the latter group symbolized an elite in the multicultural society of the US. In spite of their subordinate ethnic role, Norwegians eventually formed a substantial number in the township and were given certain credentials based on their Nordic background (see more below). In addition, the cooperation across ethnic boundaries was significant in the process of community building on the frontier.

Some aspects of the frontier period are relevant to Sahlins' concept of boundaries as contact zones in a frontier region, especially between peoples and cultures. In this case study, mutual cooperation between various migrant groups was significant in the process of community building on the frontier. Several studies indicate that European immigrants developed two different spheres in rural societies in America. While they adapted rather quickly to agricultural practices and economic life in the public sphere, they retained ethnic traits in the social sphere.[48] Norwegian immigrants adapted to their new surroundings in a practical manner. As work hands for earlier immigrants, English-speaking and Norwegian-speaking, they could take part in harvesting, threshing, and other farm activities. While being hired out to these families, newcomers looked for jobs in towns nearby. In other words, the first period of their stay in the US gave them an understanding of customs, traditions, and conditions in the host society. Unmarried women often worked in homes where English was spoken. Unmarried men, on the other hand, were often hired out as hired

46 Pope 1948: 25–26, 139–140
47 Pope 1948: 25
48 Ostergren 1983: 79–81

men to American farmers. According to the 1860 Federal Census for the townships in the Blue Mounds settlement, thirteen Norwegians worked for others in the settlement, eight of them for mostly wealthy Norwegian families. Ten years later, 135 worked as hired women and men for others, of whom 88 percent worked for Norwegian families. It was not uncommon for newcomers to work for a year for those families in order to pay back prepaid tickets. They would often work for former neighbors or relatives and could speak their own language while still learning about American customs.[49]

During the first years in Springdale, Norwegians adhered to a subsistence economy; they spun wool for clothes, churned butter, and traded these goods for others within the settlement area. According to the Federal Agricultural Census for Springdale Township in 1860, the average value of homemade products was USD 151 for Norwegians compared to USD 19 for non-Norwegians.[50] They gradually adapted to a capitalistic economy with the prominence of markets and profit in American society, but their pace in adapting to new practices was slower than non-Norwegian groups. At an early date, they adopted the farming practices of their neighbors by investing in similar tools, machinery, and by focusing on planting cash crops. Wheat became the most significant crop for Norwegians in Springdale, as it required little capital investment and would provide quick yields. In addition, it was a cash crop that farmers could sell at the markets. Increasing wheat prices in the 1850s, mainly due to the Crimean War, gave settlers valuable income. About a decade later, plagues of grasshoppers and drought forced them to adopt diversified farming methods which included several types of animals and more varieties of grain. Thus, income from the sale of cattle replaced the sale of wheat.[51]

The small towns that grew within the settlement area became arenas for cultural encounters with members of other ethnic groups. Anglo-Americans or immigrants from English-speaking countries usually took the lead in filling significant positions and in developing the first businesses in a region, while Norwegian immigrants waited for several years before becoming involved. The village of Mount Vernon, located in the southern part of the township, was platted in 1852. Clark Lewis, a carpenter, came in

49 Joranger 2000: 179
50 Joranger 2000: 181, 195 f.
51 Joranger 2000: 182

1850, Hall C. Chandler opened the first general store, and Philander Byam built a grist mill. In 1860, John Jones Sr opened the first hotel, and later C. C. Allen started another hotel. At that time, there were twelve families in the village. In addition, the village included two blacksmith's shops, two general stores, and a school house. Onon Bjørnson Dahle from Nissedal in Telemark became the owner of a general store in Mount Vernon. He also served as postmaster in the village.[52]

In the town of Mount Horeb in the adjoining Blue Mounds Township east of Springdale a similar development took place. The first post office was established in 1861 and the first postmaster was born in England. The first man to open a general store in 1866 was Canadian-born. The first Norwegian businessman purchased the store in 1871, and soon other Norwegians established various shops and businesses in Mount Horeb. They had previously worked as farmers or lived on farms in the area and had adapted to their new surroundings by learning the English language, customs, and law before they went into business.[53]

Norwegians retained their ethnic characteristics in the social sphere in the settlement. The church housed various youth and church activities, and it served as a local ethnic meeting place. Norwegians were connected to the land and established homogeneous settlement patterns; they would settle together, not only according to ethnicity but also in terms of their regional background in Norway. The Norwegian Lutheran church served to keep the parishioners within the Norwegian Lutheran fold. In the church, Norwegians could attend services and parochial school in the Norwegian language. Furthermore, parishioners organized a number of organizations, including the Ladies' Aid, youth organizations, mission associations, and choirs. The clannishness of the Norwegians was further characterized by an extensive endogamous marriage pattern within the ethnic group. A study on intermarriage patterns in two congregations near Springdale Township states that both spouses were Norwegian in the majority of all weddings up until 1930. We may attribute this high degree of endogamy within the Norwegian-American group to a compact ethnic settlement pattern in the region and the persistence of an immigrant ethnic culture among Norwegian-Americans. The culture for several generations was based on

52 Pope 1948: 25–26
53 Mount Horeb Area Historical Society Committee 1986: 4–8

family ties and a similar cultural regional background in Norway. Besides, the teachings of the pastorate in the Norwegian-American Lutheran Church bodies influenced the persistence of intermarriage patterns among Norwegian-Americans.[54]

Ethnic diversity

From the very beginning, white settlement in Springdale was characterized by ethnic diversity. The first Anglo-American settler, John Harlow, arrived in 1845, and other Anglo-Americans followed the same year.[55] Several migrated from states farther east like Tennessee and New York, but early settlers also came from Scotland, Ireland, and Canada. Several immigrants also came from German-speaking states in Europe.[56] Yet the various groups were part of an ethno-racial hierarchy with Anglo-Americans as a privileged white group on top. The Anglo-American population was also diverse, but they descended from early immigrants to America from the British Isles. They also enjoyed an elevated status in society, as this group represented the founders of the American Republic. Other immigrants were found further down the ladder. Norwegians, for example, were of Nordic background and were desirable immigrants, but in general the Anglo-American elite still regarded them as foreigners. In a study of community-building in Trempealeau County, Wisconsin in the 1860s, Merle Curti mentions that the press, in spite of friendly notices, "often betrayed a considerable degree of social distance between the old stock American group and the newer arrivals".[57]

This is illustrated in the following example. One of the early immigrant settler families in Springdale Township was the Dryden family from Tennessee. After they had taken up residence in Springdale and lived there for many years, they sold the farm and moved away.[58] Later in life, one of the boys in the family, John Dryden, visited his childhood home in Springdale. He related his experience in a letter to his sisters in 1911, where

54 Joranger 2008: 309–312
55 Keyes 1906: 307
56 Pope 1948: 55, 89–90, 111, 155
57 Curti 1959: 100
58 Pope 1948: 111

he reflected upon the reason why his family moved away. He wrote as follows:

> Our people (…) and other Americans who settled Southern Wisconsin should have staid [sic!] there. They should have been alarmed by the advent of the Norwegians, whose children cannot be distinguished from the native stock, unless it be that with respect to sobriety, integrity, culture, and the domestic virtues, and their regard for religion, the so-called "foreigners" may possibly be superior.[59]

The writer refers to Norwegian immigrants as "foreigners", but also praises their virtues. Several Norwegian immigrants from Springdale Township enlisted in the Union Army during the Civil War between 1861 and 1865. Norwegian participation in the war created a history of sacrifice, and their participation in the Civil War resulted in increasing respect among Anglo-Americans toward Norwegian immigrants and their offspring. According to Orm Øverland, the willingness to die for their host country could be tied to a Norwegian homemaking mythology. It refers to how Norwegian-Americans and other ethnic immigrant groups claimed a special and natural right to a home in the US and represented a response to "Anglo-American exclusivity and lack of respect for (…) the significant contributions by Norwegians to Western civilization".[60] The homemaking mythology symbolizes a rising self-assertion with the maturation of Norwegian settlements, as Norwegians became familiar with their new surroundings. With the maturation of society, immigrants developed identities from immigrants to ethnics in an ongoing process of negotiation with American society. In a process following immigration which involved the retention of Norwegian traditions, or a reformulation of these traditions, and cultural encounters with other ethnic groups, ethnic Norwegians gradually began identifying as Norwegian-Americans.[61]

Conclusion

To conclude, the case study has shown the involvement of Norwegian immigrants in the society-building process within a defined multicultural context in Wisconsin in the early period of white settlement. The study

59 Mount Horeb Area Historical Society archives 1911
60 Øverland 2000: 7–8, 146–173
61 Joranger 2016: 56–57

has shown that Norwegians became involved in community building and were exposed to physical and cultural encounters with other ethnic groups from the very beginning. Their involvement is relevant to Mary Louise Pratt's concept of contact zones. Norwegians constituted an ethnic group with a variation of regional origins in Norway, but they also encountered members of other ethnic groups with different cultural traditions from their own. There are few reports on encounters between Norwegian settlers and members of the indigenous population, but they occurred. As white, Nordic immigrants with a Protestant religious background, Norwegians were desirable immigrants from the perspective of the Anglo-American elite. The group had a favorable position in the US, and they achieved a high standing in the ethno-racial ladder. Although Norwegians also experienced prejudice from the established English-speaking population groups, they enjoyed the freedom to help build the new society together with other ethnic groups. The indigenous population, on the other hand, was marginalized in American society in comparison to white European settlers. Moreover, they were inferior to Norwegians and other northern European immigrant groups according to the socio-ethnic hierarchy constructed by the Anglo-American elite. Society building in Springdale Township may also be tied to Peter Sahlins' concept of boundaries. Norwegians cooperated with members of other ethnic groups in local politics, in the establishment of businesses and villages, and as tillers of the soil. Yet Norwegians were drawn between two worlds. On the one hand, they had to adapt to legislation that was passed in the US several decades earlier. On the other hand, the availability of large tracts of land also enabled the settlers to establish ethnic enclaves and nurture regional cultures. Thus, this case study may shed light on the entangled encounters between individuals from various cultural backgrounds and how they grappled with their new life situation in order to shape a common future.

Author biography

Terje Mikael Hasle Joranger is Professor in History at the Inland University of Applied Sciences, and Director of the Norwegian Emigrant Museum in Ottestad near Hamar, Norway. He attained his PhD in history in the field of migration and ethnicity in 2008 at the University of Oslo. Joranger is co-editor of *Nordic Whiteness and Migration to the USA* (Routledge, 2021), editor of *Norwegian-American Essays* since 2010, and has published a number of

articles in national and international journals on transculturalism, migration, and ethnicity.

References

Anderson, J. P., & Blanck, D. (2012). *Norwegians and Swedes in the United States: Friends and neighbors*. Minnesota Historical Society Press.

Barton, A. B. (1929). A trip to Blue Mounds (pp. 1–4). Radio talk July 10, 1929. Albert O. Barton Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Barth, F. (1998). *Ethnic groups and boundaries. The social organization of culture difference.* Waveland Press, Inc.

Bergland, B. (2021). Norwegian migration and displaced indigenous peoples. Toward an understanding of Nordic whiteness in the land-taking. In J. Sverdljuk, T. M. H. Joranger, E. Jackson & P. Kivisto (Eds.), *Nordic whiteness and migration to the USA. A historical exploration of identity* (pp. 17–34). Routledge.

Billington, R. A. (1960). *Westward expansion, a history of the American frontier* (2nd ed.). The Macmillan Company.

Collins, James P. (2006). Native Americans in the census, 1860–1890. *Prologue Magazine, 38*(2). National Archives. Native Americans in the Census, 1860-1890 | National Archives

Curti, Merle. (1959). *The making of an American community, A case study of democracy in a Frontier County*. Stanford University Press.

Dane County Probate Court. (1863). Lee, K. A. Estate.

Foner, E. (2011). *Give me liberty! An American history*. W.W. Norton & Company.

Gjerde, J. (1985). *From peasants to farmers. The migration from Balestrand, Norway, to the Upper Middle West.* Cambridge University Press.

Gjerde, J. (1993). The would-be patriarch and the self-made man. Marcus Lee Hansen on native and immigrant farmers in the American Middle West. In B. F. Larsen, F. Bender, F. & K. Veien (Eds.), *On distant shores. Proceedings of the Marcus Lee Hansen Immigration Conference Aalborg, Denmark June 29–July 1, 1992* (pp. 35–55). Danish Society.

Gjerde, J. (1997). *The minds of the west, ethnocultural evolution in the rural Middle West, 1830–1917.* Chapel Hill.

Gjerde, J. (1999). New growth on old vines. The state of the field: The social history of immigration to and ethnicity in the United States. *Journal of American Ethnic History*, *18*(4), 40–65.

Gregory, J. G. (1932). *Southwestern Wisconsin: A history of old Crawford County* (Vol. 1). Chicago.

Hansen, K. V. (2013). *Encounters on the Great Plains. Scandinavian settlers and the dispossession of Dakota Indians, 1890–1930*. Oxford University Press.

Holand, H. R. (1908). *De Norske settlementers historie*. Published by the author.

Homestead Act of 1862, Pub. L 37–64 (1862). Retrieved from https://catalog.archives.gov/id/299815

Immigration and Ethnic History Society. (2019). Immigration History Nationality Act of 1790. https://immigrationhistory.org/item/1790-nationality-act/

Indian Removal Act of 1830, Pub. L. 21–148. (1830). Retrieved from https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=004/llsl004.db&recNum=458

Jefferson, T. (1788). Notes on the State of Virginia (electronic ed.). Prichard and Hall. *Documenting the American South.* University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill digital library. Thomas Jefferson, 1743–1826. Notes on the State of Virginia (unc.edu)

Johnson, H. B. (1976). *Order upon the land, the U.S. Rectangular Land Survey and the Upper Mississippi country*. Oxford University Press.

Joranger, T. M. H. (2000). Emigration From Reinli, Valdres, to the Upper Midwest: A comparative study. *Norwegian-American Studies*, *35*, 153–196. https://doi.org/10.1353/nor.2000.a799205

Joranger, T. M. H. (2008). *The migration of tradition? A study on the transfer of traditions tied to intergenerational land transfers among Norwegians from the Valdres region, Norway to the Upper Midwest and their descendants for three generations, 1850–1980* [PhD dissertation]. University of Oslo.

Joranger, T. M. H. (2016). Migration, regionalism, and the ethnic other, 1840–1870. *American Studies in Scandinavia*, *48*(2), 33–58. https://doi.org/10.22439/asca.v48i2.5451

Kamphoefner, Walter D. (1987). *The Westfalians from Germany to Missouri.* Princeton University Press.

Keyes, E. W. (Ed.). (1906). *History of Dane County* (Vol. I.). Western Historical Association.

Ligowsky, A. (1861). Map of Dane County, 1861. Wisconsin Historical Society.

Lovoll, O. S. (1992). Norwegians on the land. In the series *Historical Essays on Rural Life*. Southwest State University.

Lovoll, O. S. (1997). *Det løfterike landet. En norskamerikansk historie.* Universitetsforlaget.

Lovoll, O. S. (1999). *Innfridde løfter. Et norskamerikansk samtidsbilde*. Vett & Viten AS.

Lowe, P. (2001). *Indian Nations of Wisconsin.* Wisconsin Historical Society Press.

Lurie, N. O. (2022). *Wisconsin Indians.* Wisconsin Historical Society Press,

McPherson, J. (1877). *Springdale in Madison, Dane County and Surrounding Towns.* Wm. J. Park & Co.

Mount Horeb Area Historical Society archives. (1911). Dryden, John. Letter dated Kearney, Nebraska September 19, 1911, to his sisters.

Mount Horeb Area Historical Society Committee. (1986). *Mount Horeb presettlement to 1986. A history celebrating Mount Horeb's quesquicentennial*. Ski Printer, Blanchardville.

National Constitution Center. (2022, June 2). On this day, all American Indians made United States citizens. https://On this day, all American Indians made United States citizens | Constitution Center

Ostergren, R. C. (1983). European settlement and ethnicity on the agricultural frontiers of South Dakota. *South Dakota History* (spring/summer), 48–82.

Ostergren, R. C. (1988). *A community transplanted. The Trans-Atlantic experience of a Swedish immigrant settlement in the Upper Middle West, 1835–1915*. University of Wisconsin Press.

Ostergren, R. C., & Vale, T. R. (Eds.). (1997). *Wisconsin land and life*. University of Wisconsin Press.

Pope, A. I. J. (1948). *Centennial history, Township of Springdale, Dane County, Wisconsin: Souvenir booklet 1848–1948*. Unknown publisher. https://search.library.wisc.edu/digital/A3BEM3U55OUC2V8K

Pratt, M. L. (1991). Arts of the contact zone. *Profession,* 33–40. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25595469

Preemption Act of 1841, 5 Stat. 453 (1841). Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/hornbeck_usa_2_d/8

Sahlins, P. (1989). *Boundaries: The making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees.* University of California Press.

Schafer, J. (1932). *The Wisconsin lead region*: *Wisconsin Domesday book, general studies v3*. State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Svalestuen, A. A. (1972). *Tinns emigrasjonshistorie 1837–1907.* Universitetsforlaget.

Turner, F. J. (1920). *The frontier in American history.* Henry Holt and Company.

Øverland, O. (2000). *Immigrant minds, American identities. Making the United States home.* University of Illinois Press.