

Story County Histories

Most of the histories below were compiled by Florence Wheeler who has collected histories and genealogies in Cambridge, Iowa for many decades. The first time I met her she tried to sell me a copy of this but I didn't take it. The second time I spent a little more time looking through the book and found that members of our family are mentioned in several places. The very first Norwegian settlers arrived in 1855. Ole J. Olsen brought his family in 1865. So even though he wasn't listed with the first settlers, he was certainly among the earliest in the county. The Palestine church was situated only one mile from the farm where Ole J. built a home and raised his family. I didn't realize this fact until my second visit because the site of the original farm is now separated from the church by the I-35 freeway which splits Iowa right down the middle. Since the freeway is raised, you can't see the church from their farm. Details like this can make a big difference. You learn a lot when you actually go to the place where a family lived.

The Lutheran faith and their early church leaders played a big role in keeping the records of these families. This tradition was continued to a large degree in America. In all of Scandinavia nearly 100 % of the people who lived during the 17th century and later have been accounted for in their census records and their parish records. Virtually all of those records are now available online, and many more early records become available every day. We would do well to keep records that are so complete today. The Norwegians are very interested in their family histories and continue to be excellent partners in this work.

Norwegian Settlement In Story and Polk Counties, Iowa

A short history of the first Norwegian Settlement in Story and Polk Counties, of Iowa, Including the Palestine Congregation, and the Soldiers Enlisted in the Civil War.

In 1848 to 1854 there was a large emigration to America from the three parishes in Norway known as Etne, Skaanevik and Fjelberg¹ parishes that settled around Lisbon, Illinois². The emigrants came from Norway to seek and acquire a home for themselves and families, and they expected to find government land at government price on which to make their permanent home in this new world. They had bid goodbye to relatives and friends in Norway and had prepared for a long voyage in their sailing vessels to America, with provisions for their families that would last them from seven to fourteen weeks on their slow sailing vessels.

Disappointed

When they came to Lisbon, Illinois, it was a great disappointment to them to find that there was no government land to be had. This disappointment was especially great to the mothers, and many of them shed silent tears and said, "How can we with our families acquire a permanent home here in America?" These mothers could not sing when they were plying their shuttles in the looms, nor when they were treading their spinning wheels, or when they were rocking their babies in their cradles, thinking of the future.

Here was a new language to learn, climatic conditions were much different from those to which they had been accustomed, and this flat prairie land looked so different from the steep hills, bluffs, mountains, and rocks that they had been looking at. And where could they think of getting a permanent home when there was no government land to be had at \$1.25 an acre.

Committee to Select Land

In early fall of 1854, a man by the name of Nils Olsen Naes, who was employed by a Bible Society, traveled over different parts of Iowa and Southern Minnesota selling Bibles printed in the English and the Scandinavian languages. He came to Lisbon, Illinois, and told them that in Iowa there was government land to be had for \$1.25 an

acre; fine prairie land with timber along the streams; a large area of land. This made quite a stir among the emigrants of Lisbon. They called a meeting and selected a committee to go to Iowa to investigate the land which was nearly three hundred miles west of Lisbon.

They selected four men: Osmond Sheldahl, Olie Fatland, Osmond Johnson and Olie Aplan, as a delegation to go to Iowa and investigate this land, and if it was found to be as described by Nils Olsen Naes, they should secure enough for the colony. These four men left Lisbon, Illinois the 25th of September 1854. They rode in a two seated spring wagon drawn by a span of horses. These men were selected because they could speak the English language fairly well. They came back in thirty days and reported that they had secured land for the colony and found it very good. Osmond (Hagefos) Johnson was one of the four delegates that came to Iowa in 1854 to select the land. But he did not come with the colony in 1855, because he had some land and livestock to look after in Illinois. He came the next year. He was the father of John O. Johnson and Mrs. Carrie Larson.

Rejoice Over Finding Land

This brought cheer to all, especially to the mothers. They considered that this delegation had done a very heroic act and it was like a magnetic inspiration to the whole colony. They commenced to prepare to emigrate to Story and Polk Counties, Iowa (they had all winter to prepare in) three hundred miles away. What a change. Sadness gave way to joy, and the mothers sang songs of cheer while plying their shuttles in the looms or while at their spinning wheels, and the winter months were miraculously shortened with the thought of going to new homes in Iowa.

The Westward March to Iowa

The men made ready the covered wagons in which the journey would be made, and when the 16th day of May 1855 arrived, word went forth that all those who wished to emigrate from Lisbon to Iowa should congregate at Holdeman's Prairie a short distance west of Lisbon. And so on the 17th of May, they proceeded westward to Iowa, their future homes. They selected the 17th of May to start because that is Norway's day of liberty. These emigrants were all Lutherans and had taken with them from Norway their parishes, a heritage. They were God fearing and respected the teachings of God's word. They would not undertake the immigration to Iowa as a colony without it being a churchly colony. They had already organized a congregation and called it the Palestine Congregation. They named it Palestine Congregation in keeping with the description of the land they were to possess on coming to Iowa.

They elected Olie Anfinson as their pastor; Erick Sheldahl, chorister; Knute Bauge as teacher. They would not undertake the emigration to Iowa as a colony without it being a churchly colony, so this was a whole congregation on wheels. Every soul belonged to it. They had services every Sunday on their journey. This scene can better be imagined by us at this day as to what this tentative organization meant to this colony. We also are present and are now celebrating the ninetieth anniversary of the event, have the blessings that have come to us, their descendants, during the last ninety years.

Let us picture the scene. The order came to start one hundred and eleven souls. Twenty—one families, three widows, and five young men, were transported by twenty-five covered wagons. Eighteen were drawn by oxen, six by horse teams, and one spring wagon drawn by one horse owned by Lars Thompson. The names of the emigrants are as follows: Rev. Olie Anfinson and wife Ingerie, and daughter Carine...Osmond and Anna Sheldahl and children Caroline, Erick, Halvor, Henry and Randy...Erick and Margaret Sheldahl and children Betsy, Randy, Erick and Martha...Olie and Carrie Fatland and children John, Elie, Britt, and Henry.. .Knute and Carrie Ersland and children Hactor, Madts, Anna, Anf in, Martha, Elias, Carrie, Engeborg and Amos.

Knute and Carrie Boug. . .Ivor and Malinda Tweet and daughter Martha... Barney and Sarah Hill, and daughter Betsy... Peter Christian and Serina Heggem... Lars and Martha Tesdahl... Wier and Martha Weeks and children Anf in, Halvor, Torres, Wier, Engebog, Martha, and Hans.

Severt and Allis Gravdahl and children, Julia and Andrew...Askel and Golla Larson and il Lars, Thomas, and Charls... Orga and Ragna Hauge and children, Severt, Sarah, Lars, and Anna.

Torbjorn and Madela Houge and children Sarah and Guste...Olie and Valbor Rouge and son John...John and Bertha Severson and children, Mary, John and Severt...Salemon and Sarrah Heggen and children, Andrew, Nels, and Olie.

Olie and Anna Heggen... Engebrit and Sarah Heggen and daughter Susana...Torger and Gertrud Olson and children, Cecelia, Olie, George and Martha...Mrs. Julia Shaw and children, Betsy, Thomas and Erick.. .Mrs. Torres Olson and children, Hellen and Rasmus.. .Mrs. Ragna Larson and step—daughter, Anna Wee. Five young men: Lars Thompson, Olie Apland, Olie Tesdahl, Erick Johnson, Eiven Olson.

These emigrants followed what was called the California trail — the same trail that the four delegates had followed. They were lucky; they had good weather on the whole

journey. The worst difficulty they had was in crossing the streams. One time one wagon got in a little too deep and they needed help. Another time, the cattle went down the stream and they had quite a time to round them up. But all these men were raised right along the ocean in Norway and could swim like fish.

They Prepare For The Journey

Before they left Holdeman's Prairie the 17th day of May, the women folk had prepared an abundance of food to eat on the way such as Lefsa, flatbroe, kavring, kregla, fatost, gaminelost, sotort, dravele, primeost, and they had their camp stoves so they could make raspe, komla, hagleta and mossmor and paatete kaka. They had prepared enough food so that nearly one half of it was left when they reached their destination, and that came in very handy. Do you think for a minute that these women could not prepare it. They had a bunch of cattle with them, some milk cows, so they had milk for the children. The journey ended on June 7th. They came to the land that was selected by the four men. They stopped on the quarter section that Osinond Sheldah had filed for himself, one mile east of where Huxley is now.

They formed a circle with all their wagons, removed all their camp utensils and commenced to prepare the food for the first meal; and thanked God for the safe journey and his righteous blessings. On the following Sunday, June 10th, in this enclosure, they held their first service, and thanked God, for bringing them safely through their journey into this new land, and asked God's righteous blessing on the new colony.

The first Sabbath day service under roof was held on Olie Fatland's land under the shelter of a hay shed. Under this same hay shed the first confirmation class was organized. The members were as follows: Torres Weeks, Wier Weeks, Engeborg Weeks, Anf in Ersland, Anna Wee, and Betsy Shaw. These were confirmed in the spring of 1856 in Rev. Anfinson's home.

Later Arrivals to the Colony

On September 30, 1855 the colony was increased by thirty souls from Lisbon, Illinois, five families, and one young man. They came in five covered wagons drawn by four ox teams and one horse team. The first colony had good weather all the way and covered the three hundred miles without a mishap. But these last ones had cold and rainy weather all the way and it took them six weeks to make the trip. Gunder Madskaar got sick and died when they got to Iowa Center September 29th, and was buried at that place. They had almost reached their destination as they only had eleven more miles to go.

The following are the names of the members of this colony:

Benjamin and Engerie Thompson and children, Thomas, Knuts, Cecielifi and Sarah.. .Mrs. Carrie Madskaar and children Engeborg and Eric.. .Wier and Carrie Johnson and children, John, Olie, Sarah, Julia, Anna, Elie, and Simon...Nels and Carrie Christofison and children, John and Emelia... Erick and Baero Tesdahl and children, Anna, Seveart, Aamon, Sarah and Bertha... and Thomas Berhow.

This colony was ready to start on May 17th with the rest but could not start that day on account of having to wait for Simen Johnson, who was born a few weeks after. So they started August 25th. These thirty added to the one hundred and eleven made one hundred and forty—one and three children were already born, but two women and one child had died, so that left the same number to face the winter on the prairie. Lars Tesdahl, Knute Ersland, and John Severson were the first to erect their own homes.

First Births and Marriages and Deaths

The first three children born to the colony were Anna, daughter of Solemon and Sarah Higgen, July 4th, 1855; Olie, son of Olie and Anna Heggin, August 14th; Halver, son of Lars and Martha Tesdahl, September 15. The first couple to get married in the colony was Olie Apland and Anna Ersland. They were married in Olie Fatland's house by Rev. Anfinson. Ole Apland was the fifteenth man to apply for a marriage license in Story County, and this was the first Norwegian couple to get married in the State of Iowa.

The first deaths were a baby of Engebrith and Sarah Heggen, the wife of Knuts Ersland, and the wife of Erick Tesdahl. Look at the picture: one hundred and forty—one souls, fifteen horses, forty—four oxen, and another bunch of cattle on the raw prairie, and too late to plant anything that year. How could they live until they reaped their harvest the next year, facing a long cold winter? Some of them had a little money, but there was not much that you could buy with money. They had a little groceries and some foodstuff at the little store at Cambridge, also at the store at Swede's Point and at the few stores at Des Moines (but that was far to go). They got some grain from the settlers around Swede Point and probably a little at Ballard Grove, and maybe they had to go to Des Moines for some. But sometimes they got down so low that they had to grind the corn on the coffee mills to get corn meal to make corn bread and corn mush. And if they had plenty milk, that would keep them from starving for a while. But the children had to have their milk first.

Plenty Wild Food and Game

But they were like people are in all new colonies, friendly and helpful, and divided the best they could. If one had food, they all had food. There was an abundance of good upland wild hay, but the stock could not live on hay alone. They had to have a little grain with it. There were lots of wild grapes, plums and berries; all kinds of nuts in the timber, and strawberries to the glory of all on the prairie. All kinds of game; reindeer, wolves, coyotes, ground—hogs, skunks, rabbits, squirrels, mink and what not. There was also an abundance of wild geese, ducks, prairie chickens, and quails, lots of fish in the streams. No one ever heard of a hunter's license.

From Big Creek Grove west of Sheldahl, till you got to Skunk river, there was no timber, just the open prairie. And from Huxley south, until you got past Alleman, there was no timber. Just a little northeast of Huxley is Ballard Grove, and a little north of that is Walnut Grove. Southwest of Slater and Sheldah is timber. About seven miles southeast of Huxley is White Oak Grove, and there was lots of timber along Skunk river on the east.

Church and School

In the summer of 1857, they erected their first School House. It was built by private subscription and was built just across the road from where the Palestine Church stands now. It was also used for a church. They had been having church services in the homes before that. On December 28th, 1860 a very stormy winter day, it was proposed to subscribe for the erection of a church in the colony. The work was started, but on account of the great national disaster, the CIVIL WAR, and as twenty-three of the youngest and best men enlisted in the service of the Union from this colony alone, the church was not finished and dedicated until in August 1866. It was dedicated by Rev. Haselquist. The church still stands on the same spot in the southeast corner of what was Erick Sheldahl's land. But it has been remodeled several times since.

Those Who Went to War

Following are the names of the young men in the colony that enlisted in the service: Olie Anfinson, Ivor Twidt, Thor Lande, Torres Scott, Halver Weeks, Torres Weeks, Wier W. Weeks, Anf in Ersland, Elias Ersland, Erick Eglund, Henry Eglund, John O. Severeid, Severt Tesdahl, Thomas Shaw, Sorren Olson, Lars Olson, John O. Johnson, Thor Helland, Holder Johnson, J. W. Johnson, Andrew Nelson (better known as Salemon Andrew), Andrew Gravidahl, Helge Hanson. Helge Hanson enlisted and had on a uniform inside of three weeks after he arrived in this country from Norway. He was nineteen years old, and he did not know a word of English.

Following are the names of nine young Norwegian boys that served in the Civil War that came here from other states and settled in this colony right after the war: Andrew Nelson, Oley Nelson, Anf in Anfinson, A. W. Thompson, H. O. Hendrickson, Cyres Highland, Nels Gord, Lars Bouq, John Anderson, better known as “Candy John”.

Following are the names of seven of the twenty—three that enlisted from here that did not come back: Halver Weeks, Elias Ersland, Lars Olson, Torres Scott, Holder Johnson, Henry Eglund, Thor Helland.

When they came in 1855 there were quite a few families in Des Moines, a flour mill, a few stores, a blacksmith shop and some sawmills. A store and a sawmill at Swedes Point (now Madrid) a small store at Cambridge, and when you started north from Des Moines and got about four miles north of where the State House stands now, there was not a house or a building of any description until you got to Ballard Grove. And when you started east from Swedes Point, got east four miles, there was not a house or a stick of any kind until you got to way past Skunk River.

Primitive Tools Were All We Had

When these settlers first came, they cut all the hay with a scythe; and the small grain with a cradle; planted the corn by hand, plowed it with a one shovel plow and one horse. They drew the water out of the wells with a hook or a rope and bucket. (All buckets were wooden those days).

They lighted the houses with candles, and some had what they called Kaala, made by the blacksmith, of iron, round painted in one end for wick to stick up, and a handle on the opposite side so you could hang it on the wall. Or it would stand on the table. It was about one inch deep, and they filled it up with lard, and put a wick or rage in it. It gave more light than a candle. The first lanterns were lit by candles. All their clothing was made by hand. They bought their hats and leather shoes. Quite a few wore wooden shoes that were home made. They went out riding with oxen in their lumber wagons, and those that had horses used horses.

They did not have the luxuries we have now, but they were happy. They did not know of anything else. They were jolly and did lots of visiting. The nearest Railroad was at Davenport, but in a few years, the Northwestern came to State Center, and on July 4th, 1864, the first train came to Nevada. In 1874 the Northwestern built a narrow gage road from Ames to Des Moines, and they put in five stations. Kelley, Sheldahl, Crocker, Polk City and Ankeny; (Crocker is no more). In 1882 the main line of the Milwaukee

Road came through Cambridge. Then Huxley started, and they put in a depot where they crossed the Northwestern and called it Sheldahl Crossing, one and half miles north of Sheldahl. A few years later a majority of the business men in Sheldahl moved up to Sheldahl Crossing and changed the name to Slater.

They Grew and Grew and Grew!

This Norwegian settlement spread out and grew especially after the Civil War. All around Cambridge³ and west to Kelley and north and west of Kelley, north and west of Slater around Sheldahl, from there to Alleman and on to White Oak Grove, and from there to Cambridge. Huxley is about in the center of it.

There was one time that there were six school districts where every child that came to school was a Norwegian, and nine school districts in which from forty to eighty percent of the children were Norwegians. These Norwegians were very patriotic. Every child went to public school. There were always some emigrants who came from Norway every year, and they generally took out their Citizenship Papers as soon as they arrived. They had their Parochial Schools in between in the Norwegian language.

The people in this whole settlement talked Norwegian nearly all together. That was natural, since it was the language they knew so well, and many of them could not talk English at all. This was especially true among the older ones, and then too, people kept coming from Norway all the time. But the children learned English in school; especially in the districts where they were mixed. They learned it right away, and the men that had to do the business and trading picked it up. They used Norwegian language altogether in the churches for a long time, but along in the nineties they commenced to use a little English, and gradually a little more. Now they do not use a word of Norwegian in any of the churches.

At first they were seldom married outside of their race; they stuck pretty well together. But now they are not particular. They marry anyone they fall in love with, whatever nationality they belong to. Quite a few of the children that grow up now can not talk Norwegian at all. It would have been nice if they had kept it up and taught them the Norwegian language, since they are Norwegian descendants. Of course, they should learn the language of the land thoroughly first. It is nice to know as many languages as possible. This is a land of languages, and I think the Norwegian language is as good as any of the other languages. It is the Danish language. We got it from the Danes, and it so near like the Swedish that we can understand them. It is similar in many ways to the English and the German. There is so much good literature and so very much good poetry

in the Norwegian language. There are so many dialects it is fun to listen to them. It is interesting too, to listen to the Swedes and Danes. While it is the Danish language, they pronounce the words a little differently, and they have many dialects too. The Norwegian language as used today is taught at the State University of Iowa at Iowa City, Iowa. The old Norwegian language is now used by the Icelanders.

The people in this settlement did not only send their children to the public schools, but as soon as they were able, they sent them off to Colleges and Universities. There used to be quite a bunch of boys and girls going away to College every fall. Some took one course, and some another. I don't think here is a course taught but what some of them took it up. There are professional men and women all over this land that were raised in this settlement, and many of them are teaching at the Colleges.

Three County Town; A Real Live Town

When Sheldahl started it was one of the liveliest towns far and near. They had an immense territory. There was no Madrid, no Slater or Huxley, no Railroad at Cambridge, just a grain elevator and a store in Kelley and a grain elevator and a little store in Crocker. Live stock and grain came from west of Swedes Point, now Madrid and from around Cambridge. Alleman was not dreamt of. There were so many buggies and wagons in town sometimes that they had to go almost out in the country to find a place to tie their horses. The merchants did a big business. There were four saloons, and they also did a tremendous business. But there never were any women that ever stepped inside of any of these saloons.

Sheldahl is in three different counties, Story, Polk and Boone. I should probably mention a few of the leading members of these old settlers: Rev. Olie Anfinson was a man of sturdy character, well posted, and well read, very religious, and was well thought of by the whole colony. They put him in as their first pastor. Rev. Osmond Sheldahl, was another man of great character; well posted, well read, very religious, knew the English language very well, and was well posted on legal matters. That made him a leader. They all went to him with their legal papers and documents. He was put in as their second pastor. Erick Sheldahl was another man of exceptionally good character; strictly honest and square in all his dealings, he was good hearted, very friendly, and had lots of friends, and I don't think he had any enemies at all. He was put in as Chorister of their church before they left Illinois, and served in that capacity, until he died in about 1915. He was also very religious.

Probably I should not say anything about Olie Apland, being he was my father, but I will mention a few things. He had many friends, and a few enemies. He was of strong personality, friendly and very jolly. He was plain outspoken, and if he did not like a person, he would tell them right to their face. That was why some did not like him. He could not stand to see anyone abuse any domestic animals. If they did, he surely would call them down. And if there was something that had to be done that no one liked to do, he had to do it. He was the goat. He run a big farm, and fed lots of live stock. He did lots of business, was very lenient to people that were honest and did not lie to him. He had about as many friends in Story County when he died as any man had. He died in 1879, so he did not live to be more than fifty-one years old.

A Stalwart Character of Great Strength

Thor Landry was another old settler of great sturdy character, and very deeply religious. He did not come with the colony in 1855, but came about two years later. If there ever lived a man that was a true, honest, upright, converted Christian, he was one. He lived and practiced it in his every day life and in all his dealings. It did not make any difference how busy he was on his farm. If it was right in harvest time, he would take his time and read a chapter in the Bible at the breakfast table, and pray and sing. He would joke and tell stories and laugh at times. He was very pleasant and friendly, but you would not talk to him very long until he would come in on some religious matter. He was very heavenly minded. He was six feet five inches tall, raw boned, straight as a dye, looked very much like Abraham Lincoln, and his face was shaped a good deal like "Old Abes". One time he and seven neighbors took a load each of hogs to Des Moines and when they got a ways down, one hog climbed over the other hogs in the wagon and jumped out. So the other men wondered how they could get him up into the wagon again. Thor did not say a word, but grabbed the hog and put him in the wagon alone, pushed him up over the top box, which must have been at least six feet from the ground. Elick Wood of White Oak Grove was one of the gang. He had that hog weighed separately, and he weighed 400 pounds.

One time when Mr. Landy was in the army, two of the other soldiers tried to pick a quarrel with him. They insulted him and tried to get him mad, to get a fight with him. They finally got his temper roused up. He grabbed them by the nape of their necks, and held one in each hand and clinched their foreheads together until he thought they had all they could stand. They did not bother him anymore.

An Unusual Happening

Mr. and Mrs. Severt Helland were among the early settlers. They were very nice people and loved by everyone. Mr. Helland was a hard working man. Once when he was helping a man that lived a distance away with some work, he did not go home every evening. Mrs. Helland stayed alone with their two little boys, one 4 and one 2 years old. She put them to bed one evening. (It was in the summer time.) She was pregnant and felt that something was going to happen. It was dark. Her father and mother lived across the road, so she started to go over there. Helland's house was up from the road a ways and there was a big pond between the house and the road, and a track or trail along the side of the pond. There was tall slue grass and weeds all around this pond, and she got off the trail. She was entirely lost. It was pitch dark. She wandered around in the weeds probably around the pond several times. So finally she got so tired she had to sit down, and then the baby came. We wrapped it up in her apron and probably in a part of her dress, the best she could, and had to spend the rest of the night there until daylight came. Then she went to the house. She woke up the 4 year old boy and sent him over to her parent's house with the message. The baby was all right, grew to womanhood, and married Henry Fatland, a member of the 141 emigrants and lived a long time. She was a sister of the late Banker M.S. (Uncle Mike) Helland of Slater, Iowa. This happened in the year of 1856 or 1857.

Hon. Oley Nelson was a very honorable and outstanding man in this settlement. He and his mother came here from Wisconsin right after the Civil War. He worked in Des Moines, clerked in stores a while, married Engeborg Ersland, a daughter of Knute Ersland, who was also working in Des Moines. After they got married he started a hotel and called it the Farmers Home. He ran that until 1874, when the Northwestern came through Sheldahl.. Olie Aplan, his brother-in-law wanted to help him and start him in business, so Aplan built a store building (the first building erected in Sheldahl after the depot was built) and went in partnership with him, and put in a stock of general merchandise. That was the first store in Sheldahl. The firm was "Aplan and Nelson". The store had living quarters upstairs, which the Nelsons moved into. Carrie, their third child, was the first child born in Sheldahl.

Aplan did not work in the store. He always lived on his farm near Cambridge. He just wanted to get Nelson started. Amos K. Ersland clerked there from the start, and in a short time he bought Aplan out. Then the name of the firm was "Nelson and Ersland". They had a large stock of goods and also bought grain. After a while Nelson bought Ersland out. And when so many of the business men moved to Sheldahl Crossing, Nelson also moved the store, grain elevator, and his dwelling. Oley Nelson was a very bright man, well educated, well read, and well posted on all topics. He had a clear voice and could speak on any subject. He had a strong personality, lots of friends, and was a

natural leader. He was good hearted and always wanted to help the needy; too good hearted for his own good. He was also quite a surveyor and had a regular surveying outfit.

He was elected State Representative from Story County, and served in the 21st and 22nd General Assemblies. He was National Commander in Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic in 1936. He was Sergeant at Arms in the House Chamber at the State House 16 or 17 years up until he died in 1939. He was 93 years old when he died.

Oley Nelson's father joined the Eagle Regiment of Wisconsin when the war broke out and had served nearly one year when he was killed in action. Oley was the only child, and he wanted to take his father's place; so he enlisted in 1862. He was 18 years old at that time; he served until the end of the war. That left his mother entirely alone. She was a brave and very active woman. She never remarried and always stayed with her son. She lived to be real old.

Andrew Nelson, another outstanding figure in this settlement, was a brother—in—law of Oley Nelson. He married Martha Ersland, daughter of Knute Ersland, was a veteran of the Civil War, settled in Polk County just south of the Story County line southwest of Cambridge. He had a big farm, fed lots of cattle and hogs, and accumulated quite a bit of wealth. He was one of the best auctioneers in central Iowa. He had such a loud and clear voice, and a good judgement of the value of things. He had a very strong personal character, was jovial and humorous, told stories and jokes; he was an excellent salesman, and people would nod to him quicker than to anyone else. He was a very busy man.

An Interesting Character

A history of this settlement would not be complete without saying something about Ranart Nagelson, the big Dane that roamed over this settlement for a long time. Nagelson was raised a printer. His father printed a newspaper in Denmark, and he wrote a piece in this paper about the King of Denmark. He was found guilty and was sentenced for life. So a friend helped him out, put him in a casket as a dead man, and put him on board a ship just ready to sail for America. So he kept wandering and worked his way west till he got to this Norwegian settlement. He liked the people here and everybody liked him and treated him nice. He was a tall man over 6 feet, and gained in flesh right along till he got to weigh over 300 pounds. He peddled medicine for a living. He got his meals whenever he stopped, and no one ever charged him anything.

He would go up to the Norwegian settlements around Story City, Roland and McCallsburg. He got all his medicine from the Druggist Gandrup in Story City. He knew 12 different languages. He would look over all the newspapers there were in the house. He gathered all the news and he could tell all the news that had happened. He laughed very heartily. He had a great memory; he could speak the first name of every child whenever he stopped. He was very friendly and could tell lots of stories. He was a hearty eater. After a big meal in the summer time, he would go out on the ground and lay down and stretch. He never married, had no home, only where he took off his hat.

He was a happy go lucky fellow with a big smile. He came here sometime in the sixties and died in the late eighties.

Another Very Interesting Character

I should make a few remarks about Ames K. Ersland before I quit. He was a son of Knute Ersland, and was three years old when he came with the emigrants in 1855. He was a rather quiet man, read a lot, and was hungry for learning. He was self educated; a very great mathematician, excellent penman, and a good bookkeeper. He was of very clean habits, used no tobacco, was a total abstainer, very neat and clean about his person. Whatever he worked at had to be just so. He was quite an inventor. He invented quite a few things, and got patents on some of them. He had a perfect typewriter, but someone was just ahead of him on some parts.

He invented a screw nut that would not come off or get loose on freight cars, but some man was just ahead of him again. He invented a scale and a combination tool; he had a machine that sharpened and set a saw that worked perfect; he had a shop full of tools and machines that cost him several thousand dollars. He had these just for a hobby, as he did not try to make a dollar out of them. He had quite a bit of money invested in investment companies from which he got yearly dividends on which he lived during his last years. But two of them went up with the smoke, so he did not have much when he died. He never married. He was rather shy of women; he always advised young boys not to use liquor; he was honest as the day is long, and his word was as good as if his name was written to an iron clad contract. He was a charter member of Slater Lodge I.O.O.F. No. 384 and belonged to the Lutheran church. He died when he was 82 years old.

Almost Everybody Loved the Hills

Last but not least, I want to say a few words about Oliver Hill. He came with his parents from Illinois just before the Civil War, and settled down just west of Cambridge.

He lived on the farm with his parents until they died, then he became the owner of the farm, and lived there until he died. He raised two boys and two girls. He was a well educated man, well posted on all topics, could get up and make a speech on any subject. He taught school for many years, both in and around Cambridge, and he was also in the mercantile business in Cambridge at one time. He belonged to the Lutheran church at Cambridge and was Superintendent of the Sunday School for many years. He did not use tobacco in any form, and was a very strong temperance man. He was strictly honest and everything had to be just so. He had a lovely home which he called Hillhurst that was kept up in fine shape. Mr. and Mrs. Hill were lovely people and loved by everybody. They are both dead now.

There are many more men that I would like to mention but space doesn't permit. There were many real good outstanding women in this settlement also that should be mentioned, who surely did their part. But if I would mention one, I would have to mention so many that it would take up too much space. The next person that writes a larger history of these old settlers will have to mention those that I have left out, and correct my mistakes.

Nevada Evening Journal, Everyday Events of Life - Strange Today

By Mathilda Tesdell, Cambridge

Do you remember when there were few folks that had a plow? Their fields were custom plowed, then the family hand sowed the small grain and planted the corn by hand covering it with a hoe. Harvest time the grain was hand scythed and hand threshed. The corn was hand husked, placed in piles in the rows and loaded later. They hauled grain to Des Moines or Madrid and had it ground into flour and corn meal. The Madrid Mill gave paper dolls to take home to the children.

Log cabins were here and there over the prairie. Walking was the most popular way to get places, often stopping as they came to a cabin for a cup of coffee, taking a message or offering a helping hand in any way. Many homes were occupied by three families. Trails were the roads. Pasture for livestock was the unfenced prairie. Each family had its own cowbell, by its sound they could tell where their flock was. Produce was taken to East Des Moines. Early in the morning butter was churned, pressed, covered with a handwoven cloth, then a covering of new mown slough hay and on its way in a horse drawn wagon reaching its destination in a firm form as our cooling system of today.

There were many shallow hand wells on most farms minus pumps, but a pail and a rope answered the purpose nicely. The well also served as a cooling system for perishable food during hot weather. Clocks were scarce, so many sundials took their place. Many posts with its handcarved lines and sunny days were common. The church bell helped people get to services on time, it rang an hour before services commenced.

In 1857 a school house was built near where Palestine church now stands.⁴ It served as Palestine's second church home. Both young and old took advantage of the school to learn the English language. Children took turns going to school, usually due to shortage of shoes, wraps and books.

As lamps were rare they studied by the "kaala", somewhat like a candle, onion and a steel container. When the first candleholders were made they were shaped like kaalas. Many evening entertainments were held in the school houses during the winter months — box socials, debates, spelling bees, singing festivals, and school business meetings.

In the summer time we had a month of parochial school from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at our school house. Our teacher was a student studying to be a minister or missionary. The first year we learned to read the Norwegian language. After that it was all biblical - most of it had to be memorized. The parents who had children attending paid the teacher. His board and room was free among the patrons. They usually taught three months - three different schools. Some children attended two months. It was fun. For many years country children attending high school had to pay their own tuition and furnish their own transportation.

The spring of 1861 Palestine Congregation commenced to build its first church but the Civil War developed that summer so the young men left for service. Help and money became scarce so it was not finished until 1866. First services in it was the last Sunday of 1866. It was built of native lumber, it had handmade benches for seats. Services usually lasted two to two and a half hours, with a packed house nearly every time they met. Services were not held every Sunday. Often an unexpected minister arrived — that meant the children who could read to confirmation age formed two lines in the aisle and were catechized by the visiting minister. His questions were from the catechism, and Bible history. I wonder how the children of today would fare?

L. T. Wing was the first organist. He let the congregation use his organ.

Indians lived south of Cambridge and were frequent visitors of the white settlers. They usually rode their ponies - Mrs. and a baby - very seldom men came. They nearly always asked for two things — white flour and chicken.

Next on the scene were the peddlers. They came from Des Moines, walked, carried two large valises. There were selling goods for Des Moines department stores. They had many things - silks, linens, notions, etc. Later they had an enclosed wagon and one horse. They came for many years and did very well.

When schoolhouses and railroads were built we added tramps to our population. They too walked carrying a cane usually. They were morning visitors often. They would knock on the porch with the cane, asking for food. Some would offer to split wood for food. Some of them were hungry, others would eat what they liked - throw the rest along the roadside. They had their own language. They marked the posts - that way they never stopped at some houses. They spent nights and weekends in schoolhouses.

Next came the gypsies. There were often several families. They traveled in covered wagons and had a few extra ponies along. They camped along the roadside, often near a schoolhouse, creek and where there were trees. They would stay for weeks sometimes. They liked to trade horses. At times the children would attend schools. They had such bright colored garments.

Next came the Medicine Wagons - Rawlights, Watkins, Mc Connors. They did well for many years. By this time many years have gone by and we are commencing to be pestered by salesmen too often. Many are walking. Amongst them are students who are trying to earn a few dollars during vacation, they sold books and magazines mostly. For many years now it has been peaceful, once in a while we hear of a salesman — most of them are out to swindle an elderly person. In early 1900 we got telephone service in southern Story. There were two lines — East and West. The switchboard (Central) was in a farm home. This was the start of Huxley Telephone Co. For many years it cost \$9.00 a year to have a telephone.

The early settlers mail came to Sheldahl, Iowa. In early 1900's the community near Cambridge got Rural Mail Delivery. There were two routes — No. 1, No. 2. For many years Frank Scott had No. 1 East of town and John Wills No. 2 west of town. Many years passed before the roads were graveled, and snow removal in the winter. When they came to snow drifts they cut the wire and drove through the fields. At times neighbors would get together and hand shovel snow drifts to open the road. Sometimes the mail carrier came horseback when there were too many drifts or too muddy roads.

In 1905 automobiles came on the scene and they increased in number very rapidly. By 1914 they were very common. I had my first ride in 1907.

On Saturday evenings everyone went to town and the business places did well. I remember when Cambridge had a hotel, livery barn, harness shop, two banks, three churches, two school houses, two barber shops, two military shops, a hardware store, two jewelry stores, a racket store, a bakery, a meat market, a telephone office, two drug stores, a furniture store, a cafe, an opera house, a lumber yard, a restaurant, a newspaper office, a canning factory, a produce house, a slaughter house, stockyard, elevator, dance hall, post office, a blacksmith shop, a creamer, doctor's office, two depots, a drayline, a mail cart, city hall, a taxi to meet the trains, service station, garage and hitchposts.

The stores were not self service. You had to wait your turn at the counter stating what you wanted. Most of the groceries were in bulk so had to be weighed. The last counter store I recall was south of main street in Story City, Iowa.

We must not forget to mention L. T. Wing's Sorghum Mill southwest of Cambridge. People came from far and near with sugar cane to have it made into molasses. Hundreds of gallons were cooked there for many years.

The settlers first newspapers were printed on just one side of the paper.

As long as farmers used horses many of them needed extra help — a hired man or two, also a hired girl. The dairy business was a must for many years. It had many stages. At first they skimmed the milk and sold butter. They had shallow pans for the milk. Next a milk man came to pick up the sweet milk, returning the milk when he made the next trip. Then came the cream separator and we sold cream. Creameries became many. Last stage, selling sweet milk again. Many farmers have no livestock now. Farm work is done in an easier way today. Small farms are disappearing. Machinery is the latest, so much work can be done by one man in a short time.

Debts are many, yet times have never been better in Story County, living standards at their best.

December 7 Delores (Thorson) Lewis brought the following information about the area churches which were directly descendent from the Palestine congregation who traveled as a group of 111 person from Lisbon, Illinois in 1855. They were Nazareth Lutheran Church in Cambridge, the Bethlehem Lutheran church in Slater and Central Lutheran in Des Moines. The Bethlehem Church at Kelly is from the Bethlehem church

in Slater. The Fjelland Church in Huxley was formed by a separate group of Norwegian immigrants.

She has had an article from the “History in Fox Valley, Ill.” which quotes “where tea and coffee, milk and mush would for colonists overflow; where pork and what would be daily bread, where each man would be cradled in fortunes glow.” “Let us give thanks to the Lord for Norwegians like this who traveled before us.”

It was also interesting that Reverend Elling Eilsen warned that such wanderlust and desire for worldly gain was an outpouring of “the heathenish Viking spirit.” But the group decided to investigate moving on to Iowa from Illinois where they would locate over a hundred miles to the nearest railroad.

They were so busy making a living and living by their religion that they left politics and secular matters to others.

From: “History in the Fox Valley, Illinois”

“Where tea and coffee, milk and mush Would for colonist overflow; Where pork and wheat would be daily bread Where each man would be cradled in fortunes glow.”

“Let us give thanks to the Lord-- For Norwegians like this who traveled before us.”

These were the promises that led Norwegians to America. But so many came to the Fox River Settlement that it was not possible for all to fulfill their dreams. Therefore scouts were sent west to see what land was available there. Among these were Erik Nilsen who returned with glowing accounts of a “land as rich as the flesh pots of Egypt.” Mils Olson Ness, a lay preacher, came from Iowa with news of timber and prairie land that could be purchased for \$1.25 per acre.

In spite of the discouragement of Reverend Elling Eilsen, who warned that such wanderlust and desire for worldly gain was an outcropping of the old heathenish Viking spirit, four men Osmund Sheldahl, Ole Apland, Ole Fatland, and Osmund Johnson were sent to stake out and secure land. After four weeks they returned to Lisbon to report that they had secured a “land like Caleb’s Canaan flowing with milk and honey.”

The next spring a group organized as the Palestine Lutheran Church, called Ole Anfinson to be their Pastor, and on May 17th, 1855 set out from Holdeman's Prairie, midway between Lisbon and Fox River. One hundred six persons bid farewell to their neighbors, and with 25 yoke of oxen, several horseteams, and a herd of cattle set out for Story County, Iowa. They arrived in their new location on June 7th. From this beginning there are now about 12,000 people of Norse descent in this area of Iowa.

A second group, the Hauge group, sent eight men to seek out land in Iowa for them. These were Lars Sheldahl, Jonas Duea, Mons Grove, Jacob Aske, John Tarvestad, Paul Thompson, Ole Eino, and John Mehuus. They selected the area around Roland for their settlement. Two families of this group left Illinois in the fall of 1855 and eighteen others followed in 1856, with 24 wagons and several hundred head of cattle.

They found good land, but the first winter was one of the worst in History and they suffered severely. In addition, it was over a hundred miles to the nearest railroad, and economic depression lowered the prices of their products, and the spring rains flooded their fields and made such roads as they had impassable. Still they survived although the absence of towns with names of Norse background in the area makes one realize they were so busy making a living and living by their religion that they left politics and secular matters to others.

Today in Iowa - Minnesota - The Dakotas - Washington State - and California and throughout the Western United States the Norwegia peoples have prospered and contributed much to the well being o America and its culture. We do need to thank God for these Pioneer of Norway for this beginning here in the Fox River in Illinois.. .an f or the Westward Movement of the Norwegians of long ago.

From: "Sheldahl History Book, 1846—1959"

Listing of the Norwegians in the wagon train to Iowa.

Ole Anfinson and wife Ingerie, and daughter Carine Osmund and Anna Sheldahl, and children Caroline, Erick, Halvor, 1~ and Randy Erick and Margaret Sheldahl, and children Betsy, Randy, Erick, an Martha Ole and Carrie Fatland, and children John, Elie, Britt and Henry Knute and Carrie Ersland, and children Hector, Madts, Anna, Anf in Martha, Elias, Carrie, Engeborg and Amos Knute and Carrie Boug Ivor and Madeline Tweet, and daughter Martha Barney and Sarah Hill, and daughter Betsy Peter Christian and Serina Heggen Lars and Martha Tesdahl Wier and Martha Weeks, and children Anf

in, Halvor, Torres, Wier Engeborg, Martha and Hans Severt and Allis Gravidahl, and children Julia and Andrew Askel and Golla Larson, and children Lars, Thomas and Charles Orga and Ragna Hauge, and children Severt, Sarah, Lars, and Anna Torbjorn and Madela Houge, and children Sarah and Guste Ole and Valbor Hauge and son John Ole and Anna Heggen John and Bertha Severson, and children Mary, John and Severt Saleiuon and Sarah Heggen, and children Andrew, Nels and Ole Engebrit and Gertrud Olson and children Cecelia, Ole, George and Martha Mrs. Julia Shaw and children Betsy, Thomas and Erick Mrs. Torres Olson and children Hellen and Rasmus Mrs. Ragna Larson and step—daughter Anna Wee Lars Thompson Ole Apland Ole Tesdahl Erick Johnson Eiven Olson Engebrit and Sarah Heggen and daughter Susana

The Story of the Early Pioneers Like a Chapter from History

The story of the early pioneers reads like a chapter from the early history of our country - so Puritan like in spirit. Like the Pilgrims and the Puritans, they were deeply religious and the church was a part of their life - had been from their childhood and they brought the church with them, so to speak, to America. As a result they had a whole-hearted respect for all things holy.

An Event in Norse History

The 106 souls that comprised the now famous caravan in 1855 were making history as they progressed westward. Traveling as a congregation, something never heard of before nor since, made the trip an outstanding event in the history of Norwegians in America, a feat worthy of a place among the major accomplishments of these people in the land of their adoption. Its inception was as thoughtful as it was unique and reflected the deep religious convictions that marked all the early Norse emigrants. Verily, they were an honor to the race and the land from which they came.

Two Experiences Could Easily Have Been Serious

They had two experiences that did not look good. In crossing a river on a barge made out of logs the cattle got unruly, broke the enclosure and jumped into the water. However, they all swam to the shore and were none the worse. On another occasion one of the covered wagons, drawn by a pair of oxen, got into a swift current and were being carried away. The wagon box had already started to float when the driver called for help. Osmond Sheldahl, seeing the danger that beset those in the wagon, called for volunteers

to go to their assistance. He got plenty of help and the wagon, the occupants and the oxen were all saved from what might have been a watery grave. Most of the men knew their stuff when it came to swimming they having mastered the art in the far off Norway fjords when mere boys.

What Food Had the Women Provided for the Trip

What to eat on the trip was their least worry, at least among the men, who had other things to think of. While the caravan had no special Commissary wagon, there was ample food stored away in the different wagons to insure eats for everybody — for the meals and at lunch time. (They had to stop now and then to rest the cattle as well as the tiring horses and oxen — and a lunch, of course.) Among the food supplies were a barrel of flatbre, a barrel of kringla, tubs filled with kavring (rusks), cookies and other delicacies. Also liberal supplies of prim ost, fat ost, gamiuel ost and what not. No, they did not suffer from want of food.

The new congregation then met at Cambridge on February 6, 1902 and organized as “The Nazareth, the First Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cambridge, Story County, Iowa,” and chose the following officers; Trustees; C. E. Larson, John Fatland, A. A. Richardson, John O. Johnson and H. R. Sheldahl. Deacons: Jonas Lewis, Oliver Hill, Anf in Anfinson, Tobias Severson, Peder Buland and Viar Weeks. Secretary — Lewis Reiersen Treasurer — A. M. Mason Sunday School Superintendent - Oliver Hill; Assistant, Peder Buland Belle Mason — organist Peder Buland - klokkar The congregation has been functioning every since, served by the same pastor as the Palestine Church.

The Fjelberg Congregation Organized in 1865

The Fjelberg congregation was organized in 1865 at the home of Torres Skarveland, half a mile south from what is now the town of Huxley. The following year, 1866, steps were taken to build a church, a mile west from the Palestine Church. Rev. N. Amlund of Story City was their first pastor. The congregation had a healthy growth from the start. It received the name, “Fjelberg,” in memory of the place in Norway from which many of the charter members came. The congregation later affiliated with the Norwegian Synod.

Shortly after the congregation had been organized a number of the charter members withdrew from the Palestine church and joined the newly organized church. Most of them had come from the Fjelberg parish in Norway, the same as most of the Fjeldberg’s charter members.

Professional Men and Women in the Congregation

Through the passing years a number of professional men and women have developed in the congregation. Others, born in the congregation grew to manhood or womanhood in other communities. Among them are the following :~

PREACHERS: ~ John Stenberg, Osmond Johnson, Ole Norem and Axel Shefveland. LAWYERS: Old Edwin Severson, John Brown and Ed Tesdahl. DOCTORS: Åd and Geo. J. Severson, SCHOOL TEACHERS: Ole Fatland, Lars and Edward Johnson, Andrew Tesdahl., Osmond Johnson, Prof. P. O. Holland, Carrie Tesdahl (Mrs. Geo. Nelson), Martha Tesdahl (Mrs. Ed. Raynes) Maggie Sheldah (Mrs. Elias Ersland), Jennie Tesdahl (Mrs. Osmond Ritland), Bessie Wald (Mrs. Andrew Maland), Osmond J. Viland, J. E. Johnson, Burton Wald, Nellie Larson, Edward Tesdell, Mary Larson (Mrs. Nels M. Flugum), Ada Tesdahl (Mrs. Martin Dobbe), Evangeline Tesdahl (Mrs. Herman Thomas) Andrew Maland, Evalina Maland, Erma Maland (Mrs. Chet Person), George Severson, Severt Severson, Joan Sheldahl (Mrs. Tracy).

Parochial School Teachers

These are the names of most of the men and women who have taught parochial school in the congregation: Knut Bauge, Osmond Sheldahl, Erick Johnson, Haldor Sheldahl, O. G. Nerness, Ola Frette.

I. H. Kofoed, Serine Olson (Wald), C. Theodore, Lars Torrsdahl, Osmond Viland, Borgen Molestre, H. C. Holmn, E. H. Myhre, Hans Oppdahl, Torkel Heggen, Anna Ostrem, Nels Tosseland, J. O. Jessinq, Torger Thompson, Bertha Viland, Marie and Carrie Larson, Ole Norem, Axel Shefveland, Bessie Iverson, Lydia Sheldahl, David Stove, Mr. Sunde, Joan Sheldahl, Agnes Berhow, Robert Larson, Dorothy Larson and Mrs. Eli Wee.

Men Who Have Served as Secretaries

Many have served the congregation as secretaries for longer or shorter periods. The three having served the longest are John Stenberg, Sam Maland and John Johnson. Some served as secretaries pro—tern, but are not mentioned in this list. The number include Knut Bauge, Torres Skarveland, J. Henningson, Torres T. Scott, Gustav Jacobson, Theodore Peterson, H. A. Sheldahl, John Johnson, Lewis Rierison, T. Nervig, Henry O.

Sheldahl, T. O. Larson, Hans Stenberg, Quaid, John Stenberg, I. H. Kofoed, E. H. Sheldahl, P. Buland, Sålund, A. A. Fjelland.

Men and Women Having Served as Sunday School Superintendents

The Sunday school has been a strong feature most of the years since it was organized in the seventies. Most of the time the superintendent was named by the congregation; at other times by a committee. In the latter case no record was made. Serving were John Johnson, H. A. Sheldahl, J.H. myhre, T. K. Tvedt, E. H. Sheldahl, H. C. Holm, O. S. Swandahl, Rev. Buland, Harry Tweedt, Sam Maland, Mary Larson, T. H. Mason, A. A. Fjelland, John Hendricks, Walter Christopherson, P. O. Louks and Irving Thompson.

Organists in the Congregation

L. T. Wing was the church's first organist. He was followed by Martha Nerness (Mrs. Thor Bauge). John Stenberg served one year and was succeeded by Anna Tesdahl and Martha Tesdahl. Later Marie Fatland served a number of years. Other organists have been Carrie Mason, Mary Saveraid, Minnie Dobbe, Mrs. S. O. Swandahl, Eleanor and Ruth Johnson, Elizabeth Maland and Leona Brandeland.

The First Organ in the Church

The first organ in the Palestine church made its appearance during Rev. Myhre's pastorate. The pastor, learning that L. T. Wing had an organ, he went to his home and found it to be true. It was an old one, but Mr. Wing had repaired it and had made it quite serviceable. Myhre persuaded Mr. Wing to take it to church and to play it, too, which he did. Thus Mr. Wing became the first organist in the church. Just how long this organ was used is not known, but it served its purpose — creating a desire for better music.

The introduction of an organ in the church had some opposition as might be expected, it being a new thing. It puzzled some of them. Playing Norwegian songs on a Yankee organ? An impossibility some said, too fantastic to be mentioned. All doubts, however, vanished that Sunday morning when the organ poured forth the sweet strains of songs which people had cherished all their lives. Pastor Myhre, no doubt, felt better as he had been freely criticized.

Singing Was Early Stressed

The first record of any choir singing dates back to 1875 when Pastor Myhre started a singing class. It was one part singing. When Martha Nerness began to play the organ she made an effort to play according to designated time, but realized it was hard to do and often, found herself several beats ahead of a congregation and to her it sounded terrible. Often she stopped playing to give the audience a chance to catch up. The presence of the choir helped some as the added volume made the lead more prominent.

Four-part choir singing did not materialize to any degree till the latter eighties when Prof. Codington started a singing school in the church and developed a large choir which functioned for many years. Among its members were some splendid talent - Annie, Maggie, Carrie and Louise Sheldahl; Marie and Lesa Fatland; Alice and Marie Johnson, Lena Nerness, Carrie Mason, Serine and Bessie Wald, Josie and Lenda Sheldahl, John Stenberg, Sam and Afidrew Maland, Cornilus Holland, Pete and John Brown, Henry and Carl Fatland and others. Members of the choir sang at the 75th anniversary of the church ten years ago.

Brief History of Palestine Ladies' Aid

No congregational history would be at all complete without something said about the Ladies' Aid Societies. What would we do in the work of the church if it were not for the labors of love on the part of our good women?

Early in the history of Palestine church the Ladies' Aid played a prominent part and this it has continued to do down through the years. The pioneers are all gone. No one is left to tell the story of the early beginning. But already during Rev. Sheldahl's pastorate there was a Ladies' Aid. Not very highly organized perhaps; but the good women felt the need of getting together to encourage one another in the christian life and helping along in the work of the church, both at home and in foreign fields.

The Ladies' Aid of Palestine church have down through the years worked almost exclusively for missions. Their programs have always been of a spiritual and devotional nature.

In the early days they did handwork at their meetings, knitting mittens and stockings, making quilts and comforts, shirts for the men and aprons for the women and other more or less useful articles. In the early days the serving at Ladies' Aid was very simple, in keeping with the circumstances and conditions of pioneer life. Late on, however, the Ladies' Aid would meet for one all-day sessions, with a complete dinner

at noon, and lunch again in the afternoon. Often the entire family would come, men and women sometimes taking part in the devotional program.

Up until the year 1890 there was only one Ladies' Aid society in Palestine Congregation. Very often they would have two presidents together sharing the responsibilities of the office, these two also taking care of the work now done by the secretary, treasurer and other officers in the society.

In trying to honor those to whom honor is due, we hesitate to mention any names for fear of unintentionally omitting some whose names deserve honorable mention. But among those who took an active part as leaders in the early days we name the following: Mrs. Osmund Sheldahl, Mrs. Erick Sheldahl, Mrs. Ola Johnson, Mrs. Golla Larson, Mrs. Lars Tesdahl, Mrs. Karl Bauge, Mrs. Ingeborg Maland, Mrs. John Johnson, Mrs. Alv Johnson, Mrs. L. O. Larson, Mrs. Torres Weeks, Mrs. Hacktor Mason, Mrs. T. K. Twedt, Mrs. Andrew Sheldahl and Mrs. Lars Eide.

In 1890 when Rev. Faresth of the Bergen congregation resigned and some of the members of the congregation joined with Palestine during Rev. Holin's pastorate it was decided that the former members of Bergen congregation should form the nucleus for the South Ladies' Aid of Palestine Church. From then on until 1935 there were four societies or branches of the Palestine Ladies' Aid, namely, the South Aid, the Church Aid, the Huxley Aid, and the North Aid.

In 1935 three of the Societies consolidated and have since met at the church parlors. The North Aid has not yet joined with the others.

The following have served as presidents for the consolidated Aid Society: Mrs. Severt Westvold, Mrs. Thor Mason, Mrs. S. H. Ness, Mrs. Willie Richardson, Mrs. Seward Larson, Mrs. Lewis Larson and Mrs. Chris Wee.

The synodical budget of the congregation has been raised year after year, due in a great measure to the efforts of the Ladies' Aid. Other worthy causes too both local and otherwise have received their support. May God's richest blessing rest upon their efforts, now and forever.

Rang the Bell at Various Functions

Through the early years of the congregation the church bell was used at many more functions than it is today. For the forenoon services for instance it was rung three times

— an hour before the services, at the time the services started and when the services were over. At all funerals the bell was tolled the same as today. The bell was also used at most of the church weddings in the early days. In this event the sexton was supposed to give the bell a sort of a merry ring, a ring—a—ling effect to indicate a happy, merry occasion; hence the “wedding bells,” famed in the song.

The First Violin in the Church

The first appearance of a violin (a fiddle they called it those days) in the church dates back to the latter eighties. Prof. Codington, an instructor in vocal music, conducted a singing school in the church during the winter months. He started with note singing, the rudiments of music, do, me, sol, do and up and accomplished just a lot. At the close of the term they gave a concert. At the concert a friend of his, also a music teacher, assisted, singing a solo. Many eyes glared when a fiddle was produced and played as an accompaniment to the singer. It was a distinct shock to many as the fiddle was regarded as the “Devil’s Instrument,” fit only for dance halls and saloons. Guitars were frequently used.

These Young Men Deeply Interested

Speaking of being faithful to the teachings of christian mothers, two young men living in Nevada surely remained true to their promises. The two men, known as Thompson and Orland, joined Rev. Sheldahl’s confirmation class and regularly twice a month walked to the Palestine church to meet with the other members. On most of their trips they remained over night and generally got chance rides back to Nevada. They were confirmed with the rest of the class.

The Congregation’s Charter Members - None Living

The charter members of the congregation were as follows; Rev, and Mrs. Ole Anfinson and family; Osmund Sheldahl and family, Mr. and Mrs. Erick Sheldahl and family; Mr. and Mrs. Askel Larson and family; Mr. and Mrs. Ole Fatland and family; Mr. and Mrs. K. A. Bauge; Mr. and Mrs. Wier Weeks and family; Mr. and Mrs. Lars Tesdahl and family; Mr. and Mrs. Knute Ersland and family; Mr. and Mrs. Osmond Severson and family; Mr. and Mrs. Engebrit Olson and family; Mr. and Mrs. Ivar Twedt and family; Torbjorn Hauge and family; Mr. and Mrs. Ole Heggen and family; Mrs. Torres Olson and family; Mrs. Ragna Larson, Ole Apland, Peder Christian, Barney Hill, Ole Hauge and Salve Heggen.

Men Who Helped Build the First Church

Building the first church was very much a volunteer enterprise — one in which everybody helped as much as they could. Among those working were John Anderson (muxnar), Hemming Romsa, Ysten Ystenson, Rasmus Lewis, S. T. Artnz, Ola Nese, Osmond Severson, Jonas Lewis, Erick Frovick, Jens Rosland, Gustaf Jacobson, Ola Hiddlestad and Lars Tesdahl. Jonas and Rasmus Lewis were especially helpful with the work on the altar and pulpit.

“Fattigmans Kassen” Had Its Place

In the early days of the congregation they established what they chose to call “Fattiginans Kassen”, (poor man’s chest). The church had it unfortunates then as it has had ever since, people that needed help. In those days they were more numerous for the simple reason that there were no poorhouses nor county homes where they could be cared for. As a result the congregation had to look after them. It worked out a plan to have them cared for at the different homes — a week or two here, a week or so at another home and so on. It somewhat solved the problem. In addition they established “Fattigmans Kassen” into which freewill offerings, assessments and contributions were placed to be used as emergencies arose throughout the year. It was a very praiseworthy phase of church work.

A Foreign Practice is Abolished

The practice of passing wine or stronger drinks at funerals in the congregation received a knock-out blow in the nineties when Rev. Thvedt called the congregation together to consider the matter. A motion to stop the practice received an overwhelming majority. The habit, it seems, was the remnant of a custom that had prevailed in Norway and brought over here by the early settlers who saw in it no harm.

When Holm Had to See a Tailor

It was a summer day, late in the seventies when H. C. Holm and Rev. Myhre were relaxing on the lawn. Myhre had just returned from a walk of some distance. Myhre, by the way, never had a buggy nor a horse, and as he expressed it, he used the apostle’s horses.” He walked wherever he went - if they did not come and get him. Being agile and light of foot he enjoyed walking. Just to show Holm that he could get his feet off the ground and do it with ease he hopped over a nearby hedge with the ease of a scared hare. Not to be outdone, Holm tried it, too, but in the next minute found himself straddling the

thorny bush. Well, the upshot was that Holm had to see a “skraedder,” a tailor, the following week.

Sunday a Big Day With Pioneers

Sunday was a big day in the settlement for many years. As they were wont to do in the mother country, the whole family felt obligated to attend services — father, mother and children and any visitors that might be at their home. It was a part of their lives - had been since childhood.

In addition to the preaching and the singing, the meeting also had a social aspect. With the services over few were in a hurry to go home. They remained for social visits — to talk over the news of the settlement, to exchange views and to find out what the others had heard from home. A Norwegian newspaper, Decorah Posten and others, ‘though several months old’, was often scanned with the greatest interest for news items from the homeland — Norway.

The Sunday morning services also had another phase. For years the church papers were sent to the pastor. He in turn passed them out to such members of his charge as were subscribers. Mail facilities in general were very poor — and that was to be expected as the system was in its infancy. Some got their mail at Cambridge, others at Nevada and Sheldahl. Often when a member went to town he got the mail for the entire neighborhood. On Sunday he took it with him to church where it was distributed. Hans Nagelson, the peddler, made this a practice for several years and saw to it that all the mail he got reached the proper party. With the advent of the Milwaukee road the mail service took on another form - one could get his mail at both Huxley and Cambridge.

Church Struck by Lightning Twice

The Palestine church has been hit by lightning at least twice, but with no serious results. The first time was in July, 1875. While Rev. Myhre was on his way to the church one day he ran across some wood trimmings. He wondered where they came from. After unlocking the church door he had some difficulty in opening it. After forcing it he found a mess of plaster and laths. He realized what had happened the previous night - a bolt of lightning had hit the tower, knocking off a lot of plaster in the lower part.

The second one occurred at a very unusual time — Christmas eve, 1893. It was a beautiful moonlight night, as balmy as a day in May and the sky was dotted with big

thunderheads which displayed plenty of lightning. A light shower fell around nine o'clock, accompanied by lightning and thunder. The rain over, Valbor Sho, who was staying at Askel Larson home south of the church, noticed a peculiar light in the church steeple. She called the Larsons. Yes, the steeple was on fire. She hastened to the Tom Larson home to spread the news. That done she hurried to the John Maland home. There she was joined by Mother Maland and the two hastened to the L. O. Larson home to apprise them of the fire. Mr. Larson, Paul Revere like, jumped on a horse to further spread the alarm, there being no telephones those days. When he reached the church he found that the blaze had been extinguished.

His brother, Tom Larson, had forced his way into the church and single handed had found his way up the tower to the belfry with a bucket of water and put out the blaze. The damage was very small.

Christmas eve was generally the occasion for a big program in the church, but that year none had been planned, due to the fact that Rev. Holm had resigned and was in Eagle Grove.

The First English Class in the Sunday School

The first English class in the Palestine Sunday school was organized in 1888, largely by the efforts of Osmund Johnson and Andrew Tesdahl, both active workers in the school. The following officers were chosen: Osmond Johnson, teacher, and Andrew Tesdahl, assistant. Henry Sheldahl, secretary and Maggie Sheldahl, treasurer. It had many members from the start and the interest increased as the summer advanced.

A Former Palestine Boy's Rise to Prominence

In speaking of careers and rise to prominence from humble beginnings, few can equal that of P.O. Holland, a member of the Palestine church in the nineties. His rise to positions of trust and prominence is a practical demonstration of what a young man can accomplish who has the will to do and can bravely face all difficulties.

Arriving in the Palestine community in 1893 he spoke of himself as "a poor, ignorant newcomer, unable to speak the American language." Two things he did possess - good health and just a lot of optimism. Eager to learn the language he never passed up an opportunity that would help him. He took an active interest in the church. Taking Rev. Thvedt into his confidence the two studied their English together. Seeing in the young man many possibilities Rev. Thvedt urged him to attend school. This was the

turning point in Mr. Holland's life. Acting upon the advice of his pastor he enrolled at St. Olaf college from which he graduated in 1904. He was a wizard in mathematics and stood very high in chemistry and physics.

His rise from then on was very remarkable, both as a teacher and a financier and he contributed much to the development of St. Olaf college. The positions of honor and trust held by him at the time of his death November 15, 1939, probably has no parallel in the N. L. C. A. He was president or vice president of eight banks, a prominent officer in the Lutheran Brotherhood Ins. Co., treasurer of St. Olaf college, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the N. L. C. A. and held many other offices, including the position as head of the school's large dairy farm.

Remember When the Preacher Came

Above all was his fine christian character and had faith in God and man. To him the church was first and the last in his life.

Remember when the preacher came for visit — how scared we were and how spic and span everything had to be, including the children? We kids, timid and bashful, would hide around the corners of the house and when the preacher came in sight how we'd run for the house as fast as our legs would take us? Once inside, how we'd stare in wonderment as if having our picture taken, saying nary a word nor utter a sound and possibly hanging onto mother's apron strings? Wholesome respect for the preacher? Guest that's what you'd call it. Then came the supper — crisp waffles with sweet, sugared cream and a goodly supply of wild strawberries in season. A feast fit for kings, we thought.

The "Pige Forening"

A "Pige Forening" (young ladies society) was organized in the congregation form in 1885. It was sponsored by Mrs. Mary Stenberg (Mrs. John Stenberg), assisted by Miss Serine Wald. It functioned very much like a ladies' aid, making a variety of articles which were sold at a bazaar, held usually in the fall of the year. It always worked in the interest of a worthy cause and grew to become a strong organization. When the leaders, Mrs. Stenberg and Miss Wald, moved to Slater in the latter nineties the organization became less active and later merged with the Ladies' Aid.

What Became of the Big Bible?

A large Bible, the big family size, was presented the church shortly after its completion in the sixties. It had a place on the altar, immediately in front of the pulpit and was always left open. One Sunday it was missing and all wondered what had become of it. It was finally located and returned to its place. Tradition has it that when the Bible was returned verses here and there and in some places a line or two had been marked with a pencil so as to make them unreadable. What became of the Bible no one seems to know.

All Wondered at the Stranger

One Sunday in April, 1876, there walked into the Palestine church a broad shouldered young man with long, wavy hair, full cheeks and a steady step. He carried a large umbrella and seated himself in a pew well towards the front. As he sat down he took from his pocket a handkerchief and proceeded to wipe the sweat from his brow, his face and neck. The services were well advanced, the preacher being in the midst of his sermon. The stranger, who sat with a rapt attention, focused his eyes on the speaker while all around him the people sat wondering who the well featured stranger could be.

They got the stranger's name after the services — it was Hans Christian Holm, the new parochial school teacher in the congregation who was to spend the summer months with them.

A student at the seminary in Minneapolis he had come to Ames the previous evening. There being no one to meet him he started to walk the distance to the Palestine parsonage after having inquired the way. With a large valise in each hand and the umbrella under an arm he began to make the distance. He soon found out that he was not walking on a Minneapolis sidewalk, but over an Iowa mud road.

Sweaty and tired he stopped at a farm home. A woman with a kindly smile opened the door. To her he told of his plight. A peddler? That's what she took him to be, but soon changed her mind, invited him in and extended him every courtesy.

A long, restful sleep and a hearty breakfast made him feel fit for the rest of the walk. He reached the Palestine church well nigh the noon hour - among people with whom he labored for many years.

No history of the Palestine church would be complete without a mention of Golla Larson, the maternity nurse to many Palestine folks, including the writer. All the children liked to go to her home. She had a sinning smile and her cupboard always yielding

pieces of candy or tasty cookies. She was rich in human kindness and thought well of everybody.

We should be guilty of negligence if we did not mention two of the church's most faithful members, Lars and Martha Tesdahl. They were not only stalwarts in body, but in mind and soul as well. No matter who the preacher might be they were always there, working shoulder to shoulder with the man whom they had helped call to serve them as their spiritual advisor. They never made much noise, being rather reserved and lived a sincere life, faithful to the end.

The Palestine congregation today has three daughter congregations - the Bethlehem church at Slater, Bethany at Kelley and Nazareth at Cambridge.

For toil, hard, earnest work and self-denials none can quite equal those of the early pioneer women who toiled early and late, summer and winter, working side by side with her husband to provide for the home they had established. In speaking of those days Mrs. Ola Omb (Betsy Oino) told how she did the milking one summer. With the three children, one outside the pen, one in a bushel basket near her and the baby in her lap, singing it to sleep, she did the milking, while her husband was busy with other work. And then - they were happy in their work.

Why the Heavy Emigration from Norway?

Why was the emigration from Norway so very heavy in the latter fifties, the sixties and the seventies? The reasons were probably many and varied. To some it was the Viking spirit of adventure. To the ambitious it was the prospect of material betterment — to make money. To some it was to meet loved ones who had gone before them and to establish a home. To many it was probably the economic condition in Norway - the question of making a living - a livelihood. This is expressed in a Norwegian song, composed by an emigrant. A few lines read thus:

Dog elsker vi dig Norge Med dine fjeld og vand Og vilde nodig bytte Med vestens prairier land.

Men naar det gjelder brodet Er det saa strengt et bud At vi som skovens fugle Snart maa of redet ud.

After Eighty-Five Years

Eighty-five years have now passed since that eventful day when the charter members of the Palestine congregation met out on the open Iowa prairie for their first divine service in this part of the country. Eighty—five years is a long time. As the years came and went these pioneers witnessed a marvelous transformation — that of the wild prairie being changed into fine fruitful farms and the countryside dotted with churches, school houses and beautiful homes where live a God-fearing peace-loving people.

The Palestine Church with its spire pointing men heavenward and its church bell calling them to worship, has stood through all the changes of the years. Not only has the topography of the country changed, but the people, too, have changed their mode of living and their manner of thinking and doing. The pioneers have gone. A new generation has come to take their place, and the children of today will be the active Palestine congregation of tomorrow. Many of the old things have passed away; some have outlived their usefulness, some of them having become relics almost overnight.

Not so in the spiritual realm - the heritage of our fathers. All these years the spirit that actuated the pioneers has lived on. The same faith, the same hope and the same love that pulsated in their lives is still at work in our midst. God is the same, His Word is the same and Christ is the same — yesterday, today and forever.

Let us continue to build on the same foundation upon which our pioneer fathers and mothers have built so wisely and so well.

Andrew and Bessie (Wald) Maland

As an educator and molder of public opinion, Andrew Maland, proprietor and editor of the Slater News, was accorded general recognition in Story County. His personal worth and his valuable service as a leader in politics received recognition by President Theodore Roosevelt, who appointed him postmaster of Slater. Thrown upon his own resources at an early age, he overcame every obstacle and through his undaunted perseverance, won his way to a position of responsibility.

He was born in Palestine Township on January 19, 1874, a son of John and Engebor Maland. The parents were both born in Norway and were married in their native country, coming to the United States in 1860. They spent one year at Morris, IL, and then located in Story County, Iowa. Andrew's father purchased 80 acres of land on Section 36, Palestine Township, on which he resided until his death in 1895.

Andrew Maland was reared under conditions that early acquainted him with hard work. He possessed limited advantages of education in the district schools but was ambitious to study the higher branches, believing that if he had a good mental training, he could better perform his part in the world. When 16 years of age, he was in attendance at the State Normal School at Cedar Falls, working of his board and in various ways earning money to pay his expenses. That he succeeded is shown by the fact of his coming home after the first term with \$15 in his pocket.

He also attended Highland Park College and at 19 years of age, began teaching at Renwick, where he continued for two years, then going to Humboldt, where he taught for one year and from there to Huxley, where he taught for three years. He completed his training at the State Normal School in 1899, but, having come to the conclusion that the remuneration for educational work was too small, he gave up teaching. Going to Slater, he formed a partnership with O. J. Viland and purchased the furniture business of Halverson Brothers, the new firm being known as Maland & Viland. In 1902 they purchased the Slater News, a weekly newspaper, and Mr. Maland continued its publication under the same title, also remaining in the furniture business. In 1906, he was appointed postmaster of Slater, and the printing plant and post office demanding his entire time, he and Mr. Viland mutually agreed to sever their business relations. Mr. Viland taking the furniture store and Mr. Maland the printing plant. He was also successfully identified with other business enterprises, being secretary and manager of the Farmers Cooperative Creamery Company for five years, carrying the concern through its early struggle and placing it on a substantial basis.

On October 10, 1900, Mr. Maland was united in marriage to Miss Bessie Wald, a sister of S. O. Wald, an attorney of Slater, and previous to her marriage a popular teacher in the area. Two children blessed this union: Ella B. and Obert J. Mrs. Maland was called from earthly scenes on January 10, 1909. She was a woman of many estimable qualities and her death was the severest loss Mr. Maland had ever known.

Politically he was, from the time of casting his first ballot, in thorough sympathy with the Republican Party. Since the age of 15 years, he was connected with public office, having served as township committeeman, member of the school board, member of the town council and in other capacities. He was a prominent factor in local policies and in 1910 was campaign manager, succeeding in nominating H. S. Helland as a member of the legislature. He was a leader in every movement pertaining to the welfare of Slater and vicinity, going to the extremes of guaranteeing payment for good public entertainments for the town.. Fraternally he was identified with the Slater Lodge No. 384, I.O.Q.F., and in religious affairs he gave his allegiance to the Lutheran church, for

four years serving as superintendent of the Sunday School and leader of the choir. He was the organizer of the Central Luther League and its secretary for several years, from which was developed the Luther League of Iowa, one of the most important movements in the Lutheran church in this part of the country at the time.

Appendix

Foods

Lutefisk: Cod fish, treated in a lye solution and served boiled. Literal translation: "Lye (boiled) fish". Lefsa: (lefse) A thin pancake from rolled dough served buttered and folded, and sometimes sugared. Kringla: (kringle) A rolled, round, or twisted--pretzel shaped pastry. Komla: A type of candy. Helliga Yule rice: "Sacred Christmas rice".

Length

Alen - From 1687 1 alen was 62. 8 cm. , and in 1824 this was adjusted to 62. 75 cm. Alnemålet (same as an alen) was equal to 2 feet (actually 2³/₄") and equal to 24 tommar. In the middle ages the alna was somewhat smaller.

Famn - Customarily reckoned to be 3 alen or about 6 feet.

Mil - One Norwegian mile before the metric system (which was adopted in 1870). The distance was reckoned to be 18,000 alen, or about 11. 3 km (about 7 miles). In the mountain and forest reckoning the Norwegian mile was shorter.

Rast - A measure of distance between two resting places, or a stretch of road one can walk without resting. The distance varies from place to place according to the terrain. This was probably the basis for the Norwegian mile.

Tomme - 24 tommar = 1 alen. From 1824 1 tommen = 2. 615 cm. (about 1 inch).

Veke sjø - Of distance measured on the sea. In old Norwegian written vika sjovar. The distance between two harbors. Alternatively, distance from place to place by water. The origin was probably the Norwegian mile, but the measured distance was to be sure often somewhat smaller.

Weights and Measures

Bismarpund (pound) - 5. 14 kg. , graduated into 24 marks. Later somewhat larger, in 1824 adjusted to 5. 977 kg.

Kvintin - About 4 grams. (see lodd)

Laup - Weight and measurement for butter (smør). 17. 43 kg. , divided into 3 bismarpund, and equal to 72 mark. Also measures 16. 2 liters.
(One Laup smør = a bucket of butter!).

Lodd - Small measurements used on a balance for precious metals, equal to 1/16 mark, graduated into 4 Kvintinar.

Mark - Measured in bismar-measures, originally 214. 32 grams (24 mark = 1 bismarpund). In 1824 adjusted to 249. 056 grams. The mark in the shipping system was somewhat larger. In addition, the mark was used in minting coins, and was graduated into 16 skilling.

Skippund (shipping pound) - There existed from the middle ages different skippund systems with weights that varied between about 148 and 185 kg. From 1683 the skippund was standardized to 159. 7 kg. In western Norway the skippund was graduated into 4 vetter and the vett into 6 spann.

Spann - There were 24 spann in one skippund. (1 spann = 6. 65 kg.)

Tønne (tonn) - Weight and measurement used for grain and salt and also for fish (especially herring). From 1683 1 tønna was equal to 139. 4 liter, in earlier times this was somewhat larger. 1 tønne barley = 90 kg. 1 tønne oats = 62 kg. 1 tønne mixed grain (barley with oats) = 79 kg.

Vett - There were 4 vetter in one skippund (about 40 kg.)

Property and Money

Månadsmatsbol (month's rent) - For property which required yearly or monthly rent and property taxes, this was paid with one month's food, or a renter may owe for one month's food. Reckoned to be 1 laup smør.

Skyldmark - Land registers were organized in order to prepare tax rolls in 1886. The Skyldmark was the unit used in assessing land value for taxation.

1 Skyldmark = 1 Krone (crown) = ~ 14 cents.

1 Skyldmark = 100 øre (1 øre = ~0. 14 cents);

Spesiedalar (spd.) - This was a coin which was worth about one dollar.

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