CHAPTER III

PIONEER ORIGINS

The grand inquest which the United States government conducts every tenth year under the name of the Census results in the assembling and recording of a vast store of facts about the people of every state, as well as about farming conditions, manufacturing, and general business. In taking the seventh census (1850) in Wisconsin there was usually an official enumerator for each organized town, while unorganized territory was divided into districts, to each of which a census taker was assigned. These men traversed the country by the usual roads, visiting the roadside homes in regular order and making side trips to see those living off the roads. Sometimes they failed to find anyone who could give correct information at home; in such cases they filled in their blanks with the aid of the neighbors or left the families off the list entirely. They often set down incorrect statements about particular persons or families, either because their information was wrong or because they misunderstood it. The latter was especially apt to be true of foreign born families whose members could not speak English, whose names were strange, unpronounceable, and the spelling impossible to Americans. Occasionally they did not attempt to spell them but wrote down, instead of the name, the descriptive word "Dutchman" or "Norwegian." Quite naturally, less care was exercised in obtaining accurately the facts about foreign born persons and families than those about the Americans and the English speaking British, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish. Still, the census

\[1\] The first census was taken in 1790. Then followed (2) 1800, (3) 1810, (4) 1820, (5) 1830, (6) 1840, (7) 1850. The census of 1920 is number 14.

\[2\] But sometimes hundreds of names of Irish laborers were taken from the rolls of railway contractors for whom the men were working; in such cases ages, etc. were omitted.
gives us the best record we have, and it is an important source for the study of the population of the state.\textsuperscript{3}

Taking the grand total, as given by the census, of 305,391 inhabitants of Wisconsin in 1850, we could reasonably classify them as (1) American born; (2) English speaking foreign born; (3) non-English speaking foreign born. In the first class we would have approximately 198,000; in the second, 47,840; and in the third, 58,400. The last two numbers, added together, represent the aggregate of those born outside of the United States—106,240, or more than one-third the total population of the state.

The first class may again be subdivided according to the regions in which the American born population originated, into Eastern and Northeastern, Southern and Southwestern, Northwestern, and Wisconsin. Placing these elements in the order of numerical importance, we have:\textsuperscript{4}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{lrr}
Eastern and Northeastern & 103,371 \\
Wisconsin born & 63,015 \\
Northwestern & 21,367 \\
Southern and Southwestern & 5,425 \\
\hline
Total & 193,178 \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

The second class, English speaking foreigners, divides readily into four groups, as follows:\textsuperscript{5}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{lrr}
Irish & 21,043 \\
English & 18,952 \\
Welsh & 4,319 \\
Scotch & 3,527 \\
\hline
Total & 47,841 \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{3} The State Historical Society has the MS. agricultural schedules of the \textit{United States Census} for Wisconsin for the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth censuses, and the population schedules for the seventh, eighth, and ninth. These schedules constitute the basis of much of our work on the \textit{Wisconsin Domesday Book}.

\textsuperscript{4} In this tabulation we have disregarded numbers which were small and of no special significance. The resulting total is consequently about 4000 below the census total of American born.

\textsuperscript{5} The British-Americans, numbering 8277, were mainly French-Canadians and they are accordingly classed with the non-English speaking foreigners.
The third class is composed of five groups:

Germans ........................................ 38,054
Scandinavians (all Norwegians except 146 Swedes and 88 Danes) ................. 8,885
Swiss ............................................. 1,244
Dutch (Hollanders) ............................... 1,157
British-Americans (French-Canadians) ............. 8,277

Total ............................................ 57,617

A further analysis of the first group of class one, Americans born in the eastern and northeastern states, discloses the startling fact that 68,595 of the 103,370 came from New York. Vermont was second with 10,157, Pennsylvania third with 9570. Appreciable numbers came from Massachusetts and Maine. Of the third group, 21,367, those born in the northwestern states, Ohio furnished more than one-half, or 11,402. Illinois contributed 5292, Indiana 2773, Michigan 1900. The southern and southwestern group (group four) is made up of small numbers contributed by the several states more or less equally, Virginia and Kentucky leading, each with less than 2000. Since the first of the four native groups was so predominantly large and since the non-English speaking foreigners were of recent arrival in Wisconsin, it follows that the majority of the Wisconsin born, group two, must have been the children of the eastern and northeastern immigrants.

The census, by counties, enables us to show with reasonable accuracy how these classes were distributed in 1850, and the map (Fig. 13) has been prepared for the purpose of revealing what elements predominated in each county. Of the 26 counties for which figures were obtained, all but three—Manitowoc, Milwaukee, and Washington—have a majority of native born. And in 21 cases the two elements natives of New York and natives of Wisconsin combined make a majority of this native majority. The exceptions are the counties of Grant, Iowa, Lafayette, Green, and Richland. The last named has a very small number, and the case may as well be omitted as possessing no significance. In Green County
it becomes necessary to combine the Ohio born with those from New York and Wisconsin to make a majority of the native element, though the largest numbers came from New York and Wisconsin. Only the three lead region counties are peculiar. In Grant, the largest numbers were from Illinois, Wisconsin, and Ohio, these three aggregating more than one-half the total native population. In Iowa County the order is Illinois, Wisconsin, and New York; and in Lafayette, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Thus natives of Illinois in each of the three lead counties were numerically in the lead, and they were not first in number elsewhere. Moreover, the total number of persons born in Illinois who were residents of Wisconsin in 1850 was but 5292, and these three counties contained 2353 of these, or not many less than one-half. The lead region, therefore, was where the "Suckers" went.

These Illinois natives were prevailingly from the southern half of that state, which had been settled from the Southwest and the South. They accordingly may be said to reinforce that element which found the lead region especially congenial, as the census shows. For example, there were only 1012 Missourians in Wisconsin in 1850. But the lead counties had 840 of them! The state harbored 1429 natives of Kentucky. The lead region furnished homes to 993 of them. Of Tennesseans Wisconsin had only 449. The lead region had absorbed 317 of these. There were 322 North Carolinians in the state; in the lead region were 127. Virginia contributed to the state 1611, to the lead region 778. The other counties bordering on Illinois were fairly uniform in their American element, though Green County, the western portion of which was also in the lead district, had not enough New Yorkers to make up, with those born in Wisconsin, one-half of that element. In Rock, Walworth, Kenosha, and Racine the New Yorkers were very numerous. In Walworth they constituted more than one-half of the American born, in each of the other three

*The western half of Green County was in the lead mining region and had some Cornish miners as well as many Illinois people.*
McCORMICK'S REAPING AND MOWING MACHINE, ABOUT 1857

From advertising sheet in McCormick Library, Chicago
CASE'S THRESHING MACHINE

From an advertisement
counties nearly one-half. New Englanders, too, were relatively prominent. Rock County had nearly 1200 Vermonters and 1700 from the other five northeastern states. Walworth had 2250 from New England, Kenosha 1300, and Racine 1650. In all those counties the southern and southwestern element was negligible, and the northwestern element, aside from those born in Ohio, nearly so.

Not only was the lead region peculiar in the selection of its large majority of American settlers, but it was equally peculiar in the selection of foreign settlers. In all three of those counties natives of England were the dominant foreign element in their population complex, and each had a different second largest foreign element—Lafayette, Irish; Iowa, Welsh; and Grant, German. Now the English, while making the second largest number in the foreign element of five or six of the other counties, stood first in only one of them. The reason for the presence of 6670 Englishmen in these three counties was precisely that they contained the lead mines. These English were in part smelters and mine bosses who came from Yorkshire, but chiefly miners from the tin mining district of Cornwall. Thus it is seen that in this interesting section of the state, where the rock strata were warped, cracked, and creviced by geologic forces in the primordial ages of the earth, and these apertures filled with ore, which men learned to extract, there was developed, on the basis of a peculiar industry, a society which differed widely in its composition from that of the strictly farming districts. When at a later time the farming interest in the lead bearing area became dominant, this social condition, as we shall see, was destined to change. Many new people came in, but large numbers of the one-time miners settled down to the less venturous and exciting occupation of agriculturists.

In its foreign element Green County had 364 Swiss. These were the nucleus of the noted New Glarus colony, begun in

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1 Walworth, aside from two cases of counties having insignificant populations in 1850—Richland and Adams.
1845 by emigrants from the canton of Glarus, Switzerland. In 1850 their number amounted to one-twentieth of the total population of the county, and in 1890 it was about one-third. Here is a striking instance of the survival of a foreign element under conditions such as existed in early Wisconsin. This change illustrates also the trend in Wisconsin away from the social dominance of the eastern Americans to that of the descendants of foreign immigrants. However, the process was one extending over many years, and the influence of the Easterners was in many respects rendered permanent through educational, religious, and social institutions which they introduced.

In Rock County's foreign element the lead was already taken by the Norwegians, who numbered 1241. The nearest second was the Irish, with 915. Following them, in regular order, came English, Canadians, Scotch, Germans, and Welsh. The Norwegian emigration to America is said to date from the coming of the "sloop folk" from Stavanger in 1825, and the forming of a settlement near Rochester, New York. In 1834 several families removed to Ottawa in the Fox River valley of Illinois, and thither came many emigrants from the old world in 1836 and 1837. The Ottawa colony was the western hive from which the Norwegians swarmed, mainly west and south, during the early forties. Others, coming to Milwaukee in 1839, formed colonies in Waukesha and Rock counties. Racine County also received a goodly number and soon became a mecca for Norwegians. The census of 1850 shows the three counties of Dane, Rock, and Racine to have had the largest numbers, in that order—Dane, 2779; Rock, 1241; and Racine, 678. The town of Norway in Racine County was set-

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* See the admirable history of the founding of the New Glarus colony, by John Luchsinger, in *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, viii, 411-445; also, the same author's "Planting of the Swiss Colony at New Glarus," in *ibid.*, xii, 335-382.

** Another Swiss colony dwelt, in 1850, in the southeastern part of Sauk County. The census assigns 331 persons of Swiss birth to that county. The Sauk County Swiss colony was the birthplace of ex-Governor Emanuel Philipp, whose parents were of that immigration.

*** George T. Flom, *A History of Norwegian Immigration to the United States* (Iowa City, Ia., 1909), 121-123.
tled by the Norwegians so exclusively that in 1850 the census taker found 404 persons of Norwegian birth, to 347 of all other nativities including American, of which there were 161—mostly children of the Norwegian families. That town had 6 American families to 140 foreign born, but there were a few Germans and as many Irish. We obtain an even more striking result for the town of Pleasant Springs, in Dane County. In a population of 732 the Norwegians numbered 471 and there were practically no other foreigners. Almost all of these people were farmers, some being farm laborers and some of the women household servants. In the older settlements they frequently took up left-over lands, as in the town of White-water, where they bought the rough hill lands and the swampy lands of the southeast part of the town. But they were not deterred from taking open prairie where it was available and openings—the favorite lands—were scarce. In short, the Norwegians, by their thrift, physical vigor, and enterprise, were destined to become one of the determining elements in the building up of Wisconsin agriculture. Their near relations from Denmark and Sweden, who had only begun to appear by 1850, have also contributed a share proportioned to their numbers.

The Irish were not so exclusively agricultural. The county of Waukesha, where they formed the largest group of foreign born (numbering 1866), had only about 220 farmers of Irish birth. That includes all who are listed as “farmers” in the census, but the list includes frequently the older sons as well as the owners or lessees of the farms. On the other hand, the single town of Brookfield had in it 238 men of Irish nativity who were described as laborers on the railroad, doing work as graders. That town had but 22 Irish farmers. The proportion of railway laborers to farmers was different in the other towns, Brookfield happening to be the place where grading was especially active at the census date. Yet, it is clear that most of those who were recent arrivals from Ireland were

performing wage labor which was usually not agricultural. Of the 22 Irish farmers in Brookfield, at least 14 had been in the country from three to twenty years, as shown by the ages and nativities of their children. Seven had lived for a number of years in Wisconsin, 6 in New York, 1 in Pennsylvania. Taking the 220 Irish farmers in the county as a whole, we find that in 147 cases at least they were well established as Americans by length of residence. How many of the balance were similarly acclimatized we cannot tell; doubtless many of them were. Later censuses reveal the adaptable Irish participating largely in the life of the state. But they are not so distinctively agricultural as the Germans, Swiss, or Norwegians. Probably the circumstance that "assisted-immigration" from Ireland, on account of the potato famine, came just at the time of the rapid development of railway building helps to explain why so large a proportion of the newcomers became railway laborers rather than frontier farmers.

The immigration into Wisconsin from the German states and provinces began, on a large scale, about 1847, though a good many Germans had reached the territory prior to that time. The first cause of the movement was religious and political rather than economic. Some congregations of Old Lutherans, who were discriminated against at home, were the earliest arrivals. The revolutionary tendencies of the age and their rigorous suppression caused widespread discontent among liberals, especially in the states bordering the Rhine, and the freedom of the American system of government appealed strongly to such men. Wisconsin was just beginning to settle; the climate, soil, and market conditions were favor-

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13 Kate A. Everest Levi, "Geographical Origin of German Immigration to Wisconsin," in Wis. Hist. Colls., xiv, 341-393. The earliest is said to have been the Old Lutheran congregation from Magdeburg and vicinity, who arrived at Milwaukee in 1839. Some remained there. Most settled the Freistadt colony in Washington County (now Ozaukee) a few miles north of Milwaukee on the Milwaukee River. Later accessions of co-religionists went to Jefferson and Dodge counties, and also to Sheboygan and Manitowoc. In Ozaukee they occupied the town of Mequon; in Washington, Kirchayn; in Dodge, Lebanon; in Jefferson, Ionia. Later many went from the earlier settled towns to Sherman, Sheboygan County, and to Cooperstown in Manitowoc. Other north German settlements were formed in Winnebago County and vicinity, in Fond du Lac, and elsewhere.
THE ELLING EILSON HOME, JEFFERSON PRAIRIE, 1846

Engraving loaned by Henry Natesta

GRiffith Richards, Welsh Pioneer of 1840

From an oil painting in possession of Mrs. Laura Richards, Madison
CASPER HENRY MEYER

German pioneer of 1842. Afterwards a prominent farmer of Mequon, Ozaukee County.
able; and the state's land policy as well as her political hospitality toward foreigners constituted a strong inducement. The movement once set on foot, large numbers were tempted to embark in it for the sole purpose of bettering their worldly condition, so that the earlier motives of religious and political freedom became subordinate to the economic motive. Books and pamphlets were published in Germany, describing the advantages of Wisconsin for German immigrants. Men of repute from different sections of Germany came over to spy out the land and give direction and guidance to their emigrating countrymen, while state authorities in Wisconsin made it their special care to allure these people. Thus the movement came to be more or less systematized.¹⁴

The bulk of the Germans who came in the late forties were from south and middle Germany, "Rhenish Prussia," Switzerland, Bavaria, Luxemburg, Baden, and Saxony.¹⁵ They represented nearly every class and all occupations, though a very large proportion were farmers in their home land and most of them were anxious to acquire lands in the new world. A certain proportion, however, settled in Milwaukee, while the main body swept over the forested area pivoting on Milwaukee as a market, through Milwaukee, Waukesha, Jefferson, Washington, Dodge, and Ozaukee counties. Wishing to be near a market, they at first kept close to the lake ports, many of them buying partly improved farms at the prevailing rates rather than going into the interior to take wild land at government prices. Some settled in Sheboygan and Manitowoc counties, others farther west, in Dane, Sauk, and even Buffalo. Gradually, as transportation improved, they filtered into practically all of the farming areas, and also made up their full quota in the commercial and manufacturing towns. In the earlier censuses, however, we find the vast majority of German immigrants in the country either farming on their own account or working on the farms of others.

¹⁵ Cf. William Dames, Wie Sieht es in Wisconsin Aus.
Some of the towns particularly studied from the census of 1850 yield these results: Franklin, in Milwaukee County, had 191 farmers. Of these, 88 were Irish and 55 German. From England came 8, from New York 15, and all other nativities numbered 25. Brookfield, in Waukesha County, had 42 German farmers; New Glarus, in Green County, 66 (German-Swiss); Newton, in Manitowoc, had a large German majority. On the other hand, Mount Pleasant, in Racine County, showed only 16 German farmers; Plymouth, in Rock County, none; Empire, in Fond du Lac County, 3; Norway, Racine County, 24; Sugar Creek, Walworth County, none. In other words, the census of 1850 found the Germans located in the forested area of the eastern part of the state. In prairies and openings there were yet only a few.

In 1850 the Welsh, according to the census, had 4319 of their people in Wisconsin. The immigration of Welsh to Wisconsin appears to have begun in 1840, the year following the beginnings of the German and Norwegian immigrations. Griffith Richards and several others came to Mount Pleasant Town, Racine County, in that year, while John Hughes settled in Waukesha County, in the town of Genesee. These families were joined by others, and from the southeast the movement trended northwestward, the attraction always being good lands at government prices. By 1856 the largest colony was in Waukesha County, 680 persons; while Columbia County had the second largest, 676. Racine, the original land of promise, because its free lands were quickly exhausted had only 434. There were settlements in Winnebago, Fond du Lac, Waushara, and Marquette counties in the north, also in La Crosse and Monroe in the west. A considerable colony of Welsh miners, who soon however became farmers, settled in Iowa and Lafayette counties in the lead region.16

16 Laura J. Phillips, Colonization of Wisconsin by the Welsh, MS. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1910. Map shows distribution of Welsh. In Racine County the town of Mount Pleasant was the Welsh center; in Waukesha, Genesee, also Ottawa and Delafield; in Jefferson, Ixonia, Watertown, and Emmet; in Columbia, Cambria, Randolph, Scott, Caledonia, Portage, Wyocena, Courtland, Springvale; in Winnebago and Fond du Lac, Nikima and Rosendale; in La Crosse, Bangor; in Monroe, Cataract, and Lafayette.
The Welsh seem to have arrived mainly as separate families, though some evidence of organization appears in the beginning. But they tended to seek out settlements of their own people, where they could enjoy their own churches, and from older settlements new ones were started. Though the Welsh element was small in numbers, their influence on Wisconsin agriculture was considerable. Among those in Racine County, for example, were some of the most advanced stock breeders in the state. Their social influence was exhibited most strikingly in their musical organizations.

Unlike the Welsh, who were grouped mainly in a few counties, and in particular towns of those counties, the Scotch were in 1850 widely distributed over the state, though the total number, only 3527, was less than the Welsh. Nearly every town studied intensively had a few Scotch families, but only four counties in the state had more than 300—Waukesha, 453; Rock, 343; Columbia, 339; and Milwaukee, 314. The Scotch were found in the towns as well as in the country. They tended to enter all professions and occupations. In finance Alexander Mitchell, a Scotchman, was for many years the greatest single power in the state. However, probably partly on account of their dispersed condition, few early Wisconsin Scotchmen were found in the political field. Agriculturally they exerted an influence beyond their numbers, for Scotchmen were generally good farmers as well as tireless workers. John Muir, in *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth*, presents a faithful though by no means agreeable picture of the unending toil endured on his father’s pioneer farm in Marquette County. The leading shorthorn breeder of the Northwest during the seventies was George Murray, a Scotchman of Racine; and many others could be named who by their intelli-

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17 Richard Richards, for example, son of the original immigrant Griffith Richards, was a foremost breeder of shorthorn cattle, Berkshire pigs, and thoroughbred horses. See *Mount Pleasant Town*. Charles H. Williams of Sauk County, another prominent shorthorn breeder, was of Welsh origin, but several generations back.

18 The Welsh Musical Union was formed in 1865, with the objects of promoting the study of church music, encouraging composition and publication, and giving musical festivals.
gence, skill, and enterprise advanced the interests of scientific agriculture in the state.

We have already explained the preponderance of English among the foreign elements in the three lead producing counties—Iowa, Grant, and Lafayette—which together had 6665, or more than one-third of the whole number of natives of England in the state. These were largely miners and smelters who became farmers in due time. Among the purely agricultural counties the largest English element was in Waukesha, 1741; the second largest in Racine, 1498; and the third in Dane, 1085. There were also goodly numbers in Kenosha, Walworth, Rock, Jefferson, and Fond du Lac counties. Other counties had fewer, but all had some.

Like the Scotch, the English were usually widely dispersed, as individuals or families, among the prevailing American population, the identity of language and similarity of traditions operating to make both the English and the Scotch organic elements in the American social order. The Welsh were less easily assimilable, and the Cornish miners, as a distinctive occupational class, also remained for a time somewhat aloof from the Americans.

Some efforts were made to colonize English people in Wisconsin. One such led to a settlement in Dane County, at Mazomanie, under the auspices of the British Temperance Emigration Society. The settlers were largely artizans from Liverpool. Agents of the society came out in advance, bought land, erected log houses, and in other ways prepared for the coming of the emigrant families. This settlement was established in the years 1843–50. A kind of offshoot, by suggestion, of the Dane County movement was the English settlement formed about the same time near Fox River in Racine County. Most of those people, also, were artizans. The decade of the forties was in Great Britain a time of unrest and discouragement.

19 See William Kittle, The History of the Township and Village of Mazomanie (Madison, Wis., 1900).
20 One of their leaders was Edwin Bottomley, whose letters and papers are published in Wis. Hist. Colls., xxv.
for artizans, as well as for the agricultural laborers, and the English emigration of the period contained a large proportion of each, together with families possessed of more means who came from both country and town. An Owenite community was started in Waukesha County, town of Genesee. A larger English settlement occupied most of the town of Lisbon in the same county. Probably the selection, in 1842, by the Episcopal church, of the Nashotah lakes as the site of their theological institution, and the establishment of the bishop’s residence near by in 1846, had some influence in attracting English settlers to that section of Wisconsin and helped to make Waukesha County, in the early days, the banner English county of the state.

In the general summary we have spoken of the natives of Canada (8277) as non-English, and it is probably correct to regard most of them as French, particularly those who belong to the fur trade tradition. Yet, there must have been a good many English from Canada, also Scotch and possibly Irish. Brown and Winnebago counties together had more than 1000 Canadians, Dodge and Fond du Lac had 1300, while Crawford and Grant had about 400. The farming counties of the southeast all had respectable numbers of them.

The Dutch (from Holland) were a small element, given incorrectly in the census summary at 1157 all told. Most of them, some 1300, were in the three counties of Milwaukee, Sheboygan, and Brown. All the rest of the counties contained but 300, of which Fond du Lac had one-half.

The major American element in the population was the Northeasterners. As already pointed out, the Americans were in the majority in all counties save three—Manitowoc, Milwaukee, and Washington—and in 21 counties the New Yorkers, added to the natives of Wisconsin, made up a majority of the Americans. It requires no argument to show

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21 A community on the communistic basis, following the principles embodied by Robert Dale Owen in his Indiana colony at New Harmony.

that natives of Wisconsin were in 1850 prevailingly in the stages of childhood and youth. So that, practically, affairs were in control of the New Yorkers supported by other eastern people and by those from Ohio and the northwestern states. Vermonters were about one-sixth as numerous as New Yorkers; other New Englanders, taken together, made up about as many as the Vermonters; while Pennsylvanians, Jerseyites, etc. were approximately as many more. In other words, wherever there were six New Yorkers there was apt to be another middle states man, a Vermonter, another New Englander, and an Ohioan, who also in most cases, like the bulk of the New Yorkers, was probably of New England origin.

The two states of Vermont and New York are so peculiarly the "cradle" of Wisconsin's society in its early stages, with all that fact implies as respects her institutions agriculturally and otherwise, that some special study of those states is called for by way of background. And, first, it may be said that it was the northern and western counties of New York and the western counties of Vermont which sent the great bulk of the immigrants into the new commonwealth growing up tributary to Lake Michigan. It was these western counties, in the two states, which by reason of their stage of development were among all eastern communities in the best situation to release population for colonizing purposes at the time Wisconsin was in the making.

Vermont was the earlier of the two regions to be settled, but its actual development as an agricultural community was slower than that of western New York, so that the canal building epoch found them similarly situated though the opportunity for rapid progress in the fine, tillable lands of the Empire State was superior to that in the rough, much divided and dissected, though not infertile, area east of Lake Champlain. Until the canal came, both regions had been nearly but not quite cut off from markets. The western Vermonters could reach the Hudson by making the long haul to Albany or Troy;
A PROSPEROUS NEW ENGLAND FARM

Birthplace of George B. Burrows, Springfield, Vermont
OLD SWISS CHURCH, NEW GLARUS, WISCONSIN
the New Yorkers could haul to the Mohawk, or flat-boat their grain, flour, and pork down the Susquehanna, the Delaware, or the Allegheny River. The process of marketing, by all these expedients, was uncertain and expensive. The remedy was canals, and the great New York project for canal building embraced as one feature the construction of a canal from Albany to Whitehall, where it communicated with the far-extended waters of Lake Champlain. The other important feature was the Erie Canal. One opened a line of transportation from the central portions of western New York, connecting with the Hudson; the other made a convenient outlet for all that portion of Vermont which was within hauling distance of the numerous ports on Lake Champlain. That meant practically the greater part of Vermont, west of the ridge of the Green Mountains—at least the five western counties of Franklin, Chittenden, Addison, Rutland, and Bennington. A glance at the map (Fig. 14) will show that Lake Champlain is itself a natural canal of extraordinary length. With the artificial link uniting it with the Hudson, it was bound to prove of infinite economic importance to both New York and Vermont.

In consequence of the opening, about 1820, of this new line of transportation, agriculture in Vermont underwent a rapid and radical transformation. In the time before the canal the farm was a self-sufficing unit, the family producing in field and household almost everything required for its sustenance. Little was raised which could be sold for cash, except cattle. These, purchased by the drovers, were driven to the New York market or to Boston. An annual trip by the farmer to Albany with a load of dairy products, maple sugar, or pork was the only other means of furnishing the family with those absolutely essential supplies which could be secured only from outside.

The farm homes were scattered widely, not only through the valleys but over the sides of steep hills and mountains and even on their summits. In building homes the pioneers had little reference to ease of communication with the outside
FIG. 14. VERMONT AND NEW YORK CANALS ABOUT 1837
world, a trip out being only an occasional event. They built wherever the land seemed productive and where the labor of clearing was not too great. One of the most impressive social effects of the opening of canal transportation, as noticed by Vermont historians, was the way the inhabitants deserted the highlands, leaving vacant houses scattered over the mountains. The hill roads were closed and new ones opened on the lower grounds, making a system of highways leading to the shipping points. At the same time the inhabitants were concentrated in the mountain valleys, along the river courses, and near the long shore line of Lake Champlain.

That change illustrates the change which was occurring in Vermont agriculture. Wheat raising was no longer as profitable as it had been. On the other hand, with water transportation dairy products, pork, mutton, potatoes, and onions could be shipped regularly and cheaply to the New York market. The rich valley lands which grew hay, corn, and root crops rose rapidly in value. The hill lands also advanced in price, but these were now worth decidedly more for pasturage than for cultivation. They supplied much of the summer feed for cows and young stock, for horses, and especially for the fine wooled merino sheep, in the rearing of which Vermont farmers were becoming famous. Farmers whose lands were mostly hill lands could not take full advantage of the new agricultural opportunity. Small farmers were handicapped for livestock and dairy farming as compared with those having larger holdings and the proper varieties of land within the same farm. Under the advancing prices, however, it was a temptation to sell the farms which for any reason seemed unsatisfactory. Also, those farmers who did not care to readjust their agriculture to the new conditions were now able to sell out readily, go west, and raise wheat along with those who were eager to get away because their farms were ill adapted to a livestock economy.

That there was much consolidating and remodeling of the farms is shown not only by the vacant, decaying farmhouses
on the hills and the new ones in the valleys, but also by the fact that the agricultural population in these counties actually decreased between 1830 and 1850. Besides, the testimony of writers in the forties is that many of the dairy farms were relatively large, supporting 40 or more cows, while flocks of 100 to 200 sheep were extremely common. The whole point is, that when farming became a business instead of merely a way of getting a primitive living, it soon shifted to the basis of a livestock economy, which requires for success—at least under conditions prevailing at that time—a considerable amount of land.

The facts just stated give the reasons for the rapid emigration of Vermonters to the West during the period of readjustment following the opening of the canal. A similar situation was to be found in western New York at the same period. New York counties, too, were by 1840 losing rural population. The local historians bewail the fact that, but for the rapid growth of towns and villages their counties would soon be in serious distress from the loss of so many of their inhabitants. They explain that the opening of new markets to their farmers, as branch canals were completed from time to time, changed the character of farming from the earlier wheat growing basis to the livestock and dairying basis, which required more land. The larger farmers had in many cases bought out the small farmers, ‘to enlarge their own fields. The latter class emigrated to the west where land is cheap.’

23 See Hosea Beckley, History of Vermont (Brattleboro, Vt., 1846), especially p. 27, 58–60, 140–141.

24 With the soiling system, the silo, and high-producing dairy cows the present-day farmer can make a success of dairying on a small farm.

25 Hiram C. Clark, History of Chenango County (Norwich, N. Y., 1850), 73. The same testimony comes from Emory F. Warren, Sketches of the History of Chautauqua County (Jamestown, N. Y., 1846), 133. Speaking of the census of 1840, which showed an increase for the county of only 2672 in five years, he says: ‘The emigration to the west from this county has been large, and it is believed much larger than the accession to our numbers in agricultural sections. The pursuits of the agricultural population have tended to diminish rather than increase their numbers. The accumulation of real estate in the hands of those engaged in grazing, has materially diminished the number of those who held small tracts of land, while the latter have sought wider, and more fertile fields in the valley of the Mississippi.’
FARM HOME AT EAST WINTHROP, MAINE
Built before 1819

FARM HOME AT BLOOMFIELD, CONNECTICUT, NEAR HARTFORD
Built in the eighteenth century
OLD HOME IN DELAWARE COUNTY, NEW YORK

A PENNSYLVANIA FARM HOME
House built before 1815
Railway building followed canal building and stimulated improvement in a revolutionary manner for a number of years. 26 Doubtless, also, the ease with which farms could be made in the region of prairies and openings had its influence in inducing farmers to part with lands only half cleared, and go west rather than challenge the heavy task of clearing the balance. This is said to have been one chief influence affecting emigration from Ohio, which likewise yielded many valuable farmers to early Wisconsin, and conditions in New York were nearly the same as in Ohio. 27

Wisconsin, at the moment, was a favored western land for these New York and Vermont people, as well as for other Easterners and emigrants from Ohio. 28 Lake Michigan was quite as advantageous for commerce, save for the greater length of shipping route, as Lake Champlain or the Grand Canal, while the destination of freight consigned to vessels at her ports was the same as for that consigned to the canal at Whitehall or at Utica.

If one could recover the everyday thoughts of these people, to whom canal transportation, the Erie Canal, the Great Lakes system, and the far western lands along the Great Lakes were, of course, daily topics of conversation, we would probably discover that the generation then on the stage in western Vermont and New York were better prepared, psychologically, for making new homes on the distant shores of Lake Michigan than Connecticut people of fifty years earlier had been for moving into western New York, or into Vermont itself. With cheap water transportation assured, the excellence of the lands in Wisconsin or Illinois or Michigan and the chance to secure farms embracing in due proportions prairie, mead-

26 See article by Rufus King, in Milwaukee Sentinel, Aug. 20, 1851, entitled "The New York and Erie Railroad." He shows how the country between Dunkirk and Elmira was changing (new houses building, new lands brought under improvement, new plank roads begun, etc.) as a result of the opening of the railroad.
27 See Sir James Caird, Prairie Farming in America (New York, 1859), 119. Ohio had lost 140,000 people in seven years, from 1850 to 1857. Small farmers were selling to larger farmers and going west to the prairies.
ow, and woodland\textsuperscript{29} constituted a lure which was overpower-
ing. The sale of a small farm in the home land, at prevailing
prices, would enable the emigrant to buy a generous quantity
of government land or speculator land, erect buildings and
fences, and farm on a larger scale than formerly.\textsuperscript{30} Those
who preferred wheat raising to general farming—and they
were legion—found on the prairies and openings of the West,
near the lake ports, an unrivaled opportunity. So they came,
these intelligent, moral, industrious, and enterprising East-
erners. They overran the southeastern counties of Wisconsin
in short order, picking the finest lands in the most ideal com-
binations, also looking for honest speculations in mill sites
and town sites. They came to Wisconsin in such numbers
that, in the short space of fifteen years, our state had almost
as large a total population as Vermont.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{29} Woodland in western New York was quite as valuable as good farm land. See

\textsuperscript{30} The Vermont papers in 1837 contain numerous advertisements of farms for
sale. Also, a through packet line of canal boats was put on to carry westward
bound passengers from the ports on Lake Champlain to Buffalo. These boats
moved forward day and night, reaching Buffalo in six days from Vergennes.

\textsuperscript{31} Wisconsin, in 1850, had 305,391; Vermont, by the same census, had 314,120.