LOCATION.—The town of Bangor, organized in 1856, occupies township 16, range 5 west, in La Crosse County. The town is bounded north by Burns, east by Leon (Monroe County), south by Washington, and west by Hamilton and Barre. The town of Sparta (Monroe County) corners with it at the northeast, and La Crosse River, which flows southwest through Sparta, touches Bangor at the northern boundary in section 5.

SURFACE AND DRAINAGE.—The town lies in the Driftless Area, which explains its fundamental physical characteristics. Fish (or Wiant’s) Creek in the east and Dutch Creek in the west, affluents of the La Crosse, with their numerous branches, together with Thompson’s Creek in the north and Bostwick’s Creek in the southwest, water the town so fully that nearly all sections are supplied with running streams. Besides these there are numerous springs.

La Crosse River, the master stream of the region, here flows in the trough of a nearly level alluvial area about two miles wide, skirted by higher bench land and bordered by bluffs which rise gradually from 250 to 350 or 000 feet above the valley floor. Penetrating the upland, from the valley’s rim and from the narrower valleys or coulees, are ravines of varying width, produced by the erosion process which dissected the original upland plain into its present form. Belts of alluvial land border all the streams.

TYPES OF SOIL.—The principal types of soil are Wabash silt loam in Fish Creek valley, Wabash loam in the valleys of Dutch Creek and Bostwick’s Creek, Waukesha sandy loam and Waukesha silt loam in the level phase of La Crosse valley, the steep phase of Knox silt loam on the gentler slopes, Knox silt on the ridges and the rough, stony land on steep slopes, hog-hanks, and wherever the original soil mantle has been much disturbed. All of these except the last are adapted to grain and grass growing when not too steep, in which case they are subject to gullying.² The sandy soils are light, yet not unproductive under careful tillage.

TIMBER.—The original timber covering of the land consisted of the several varieties of oak, especially white, black, and burr oak, some jack oak, and a little birch. There was practically no heavy timber and the amount of prairie and open land was considerable, especially in the valleys, as the surveyor’s notes show. This fact, coupled with the prevailingly light but responsive character of the soil, explains the rapidity of the process of farm making in the more desirable areas. The labor of clearing and breaking was comparatively light. It became heavier in the more rugged sections, opened later, since timber grew rapidly on all uncultivated lands after settlement had put an end to the annual burnings.

BEGINNINGS OF SETTLEMENT.—The earliest entry of land in township 16, range 5 west seems to have been made in 1850, by Abial Morrison—the southwest quarter of section 5. The first settlers, however, are said to have been a group of five Swiss led by John Bosshard, who came to Bangor in 1851 from the Swiss settlement in Sauk County. Three of them located in the valley of Dutch Creek, and the others in the La Crosse valley.³ The progress of settlement was slow until 1854. After that it was rapid. However, the year 1860 found the town with considerable government land still untaken. It lay along the steep hill slopes and on the narrow ridges, the least desirable land for farming. All of the best agricultural lands were in private hands.

The special incentive to settlement in the town during the fifties was the building of the La Crosse and Milwaukee Railroad, completed in 1858. It brought the entire La Crosse valley, with its tributary valleys and coulees, within reach of the lake port for marketing purposes.

PROGRESS OF FARM MAKING.—According to the census of 1860, only 5257 acres was included within the 30 existing farms, which is less than one-fourth of the land in the township. Of the land in farms, 2295 acres was under cultivation and 3058 uncultivated. By the next census there were 115 farms, the area of land in farms had increased to 16,852 acres, while the cultivated had risen to 7287 acres. In 1880 practically all the land of the township was included in farms, and the improved—11,412 acres—was more than the unimproved—11,103 acres. The process of bringing the lands under complete subjection, therefore, occupied approximately twenty-five years. But the best and most accessible lands were in use within ten years after immigration had fully set in. The censuses of 1885 and 1890 showed a slight decrease in number of improved acres, but the census of 1905 reported a cultivated acreage of 12,716 or an average per farm of 110.5 acres, and an uncultivated total of 11,201 acres or an average per farm of 97.4 acres. There were only 115 farms in the town at this time, and the averaged sized farm was 208 acres.

CLASSIFICATION OF FARMS ACCORDING TO AREA.—Classifying for the three census periods of 1860, 1870, and 1880 for sizes of farms, we get the following results: In 1860 all but 5 of the 30 farms in the town had 100 or more acres. None were under 20 acres in area, 2 were between 20 and 49 acres, 3 between 50 and 99 acres, 11 between 100 and 174 acres, and 14 between 175 and 499 acres. No farm held more than 500 acres at any of the three census periods. In 1870 there were 7 farms under 20 acres, 4 between 20 and 49 acres, 10 between 50 and 99 acres, 48 between 100 and 174 acres, and 48 between 175 and 499 acres. In 1890 there were 2 farms in the class under 20 acres. There were 8 in the second class, 8 in the third class, 44 in the fourth class, and 61 in the fifth class.

As there was a considerable amount of rough land in Bangor as a Driftless Area town, a classification of acres actually cleared at different census periods is also important. In 1860 there were 5 farms having 40 acres or less of cultivated land, in 1870 there were 48 farms in that class, and in 1880, 27. In the class of 41 to 60 acres of improved land there were at the three periods 9, 16, and 18; of 61 to 100 acres, 10, 81, and 41; and over 100 acres, 6, 20, and 37.

GENERAL PRODUCTIONS.—The relative excellence of the lands for wheat is shown by the fact that Bangor’s thirty farms produced, in 1850, 13,088 bushels, which was 436 bushels per farm on the average—the highest rate among the towns compared, with the exception of Pleasant Springs in Dane County. In 1869 Bangor’s average per farm, 642 bushels, was the highest by a good margin of all towns compared. In 1879 the town again stood first, with 411 bushels per farm. Of other market cereals, Bangor grew in 1859 no rye or barley. In 1869 her barley yield per farm stood at 105 bushels, next to that of Mount Pleasant, which was highest; and in 1879 the town produced a few bushels each of barley and rye. Hops were grown in 1869 by nine farmers, to the aggregate amount of 24,607 pounds. Ten years later five farmers were still growing hops. They produced 14,800 pounds. No tobacco was grown in the town in those years.

Oats averaged 588 bushels per farm in 1859, 297 in 1869, and 285 in 1879; corn, 303 in 1859, 75 in 1869, and 193 in 1879. Of hay there was less than 6 tons in 1859, 14 tons in 1869, and 17 tons in 1879. The drop in production of oats and corn between 1859 and 1869 was probably due partly to the decreasing devotion to wheat raising during the war and in the period of high prices after the war, and partly to the fact that the lands opened up after 1859 were less favorable to corn and oats than the alluvial valley soils and the more level bench lands on which the earlier farms were made.

In average livestock valuation Bangor stood first in 1859, eighth in 1869, and eleventh in 1879. The difference, however, seems to have been caused by increases in the other towns rather than by any decline in livestock production in Bangor, which maintained a fairly consistent record through the three census periods. The average number of milch cows remained

² History of La Crosse County, Wisconsin (Chicago, 1881), 719.

³ History of La Crosse County, Wisconsin (Chicago, 1881), 719.
about the same, that of other cattle increased slightly, while sheep and pigs varied a little. The Bangor farmers of the early period, being primarily wheat growers, do not appear to have taken full advantage of the range furnished by unoccupied grass-covered ravines, hill slopes, and ridges in order to raise large herds of cattle. The largest herd on any farm in 1860 was 45 head—15 cows and 30 other cattle. In 1870 the maximum number of cows was 15, the maximum of other cattle 20; while in 1880 one farm had 15 cows and 28 other cattle, and another 8 cows and 35 other cattle. The largest flock of sheep in 1860 was 60; in 1870, 51. In 1880 sheep were a negligible factor. Swine, however, had advanced strongly. One farm had 90 head, several others 70 each, whereas the largest number in 1860 was 32, and in 1870, 11.

The record of cows, as given above, will control the record of dairy productions, which in 1859 consisted of 6050 pounds of butter and 3150 pounds of cheese; in 1869, of 24,235 pounds butter and 275 pounds cheese; and in 1879, of 14,525 pounds butter and 25 pounds of cheese. Since the number of milch cows in 1860 was greater than in 1870, it is probable that a portion of the milk was made up into cheese at factories. The state census of 1885 credits Bangor with 58,100 pounds of cheese and 35,550 pounds of butter.

By that time, therefore, the dairy business was well established. The number of milch cows was not given separately in that census, but the total of cattle and calves on hand was 1344, just 200 less than in 1880, when the cows numbered 545 and other cattle 999. Doubtless the number of cows had not decreased, and it had probably increased considerably under the cheese making régime. In 1895 the town had 1001 milch cows. It had one cheese factory and one creamery. The butter product was given as 60,750 pounds, cheese 14,000 pounds. By 1905 the number of milch cows had risen to 1614. The butter product (from home dairying) was 17,229 pounds; the creamery product from 1400 cows, 220,000 pounds of butter; and the cheese factory product from 550 cows, 293,000 pounds of cheese.

Special Productions.—Special crops are not extensively developed in Bangor. Hay was produced to a moderate extent, according to the census of 1905. At that time 2837 acres, producing 4431 tons valued at $21,875, was reported; also a small amount of tobacco, 10,000 pounds valued at $650, and small amounts of potatoes, 4201 bushels valued at $1293, and apples, 2049 bushels valued at $644. Cucumbers, melons, strawberries, and small fruits are grown successfully but not to a great extent. Truck crops, which include early and late potatoes, cabbage, melons, radishes, celery, beets, sweet-corn, peas, beans, and rhubarb, are also grown in small amounts. Much more could be done along these lines and also with sugar beets.

Value of Productions.—The value of all farm productions in 1869 was $117,859, and the average per farm was $1083. Since only 109 farms reported incomes, this would bring the actual average up to $1081. In 1879 the total was $118,010 and the average per farm $959. At the first period there were 45 incomes of $1000 or over, the maximum being $3720, made out of livestock and general farming. Thirty-three were between $600 and $999, 18 between $400 and $599, and 10 between $200 and $399. There were 3 incomes of less than $200. In 1879 the maximum income was $1856, made largely from wheat, and there were 11 others of $1000 or more. There were 26 of the second class ($600 to $999), 44 of the third class ($400 to $599), and 24 of the fourth class ($200 to $399). Incomes falling below $200 rose to the number of 29. In 1904 the average farm income was practically the same as in 1879 ($940). The number of cows in 1905 was 1614 as against 545 of 1880. At the later period the average value of dairy productions per farm was $469 and of other livestock $211. Crop incomes averaged $132 per farm. In 1920 the number of cows had further increased to 2035, the average value of dairy productions to $1418 and of other livestock to $1062, crop incomes to $834, and total farm incomes to $2814. Allowing for high prices at this period, there was a real increase in total incomes derived mainly from dairy and other livestock productions.

Manufactures.—According to the census of 1860 the village of Bangor, located on the railroad in sections 4 and 5, had several stores, a blacksmith shop, and a gristmill. In 1864 a woolen mill was established on Dutch Creek near the village of Bangor. The gristmill, which was built in 1853 and 1854, was also on Dutch Creek.

Villages, Post Offices, Schools, and Churches.—In 1857, according to the county map, the settlements were mainly in the two larger coulees of Dutch Creek and Want's Creek, in each of which was a school. A few families were living in that portion of Bostwick's Creek valley which lies in the town of Bangor, and there were scattered settlers on the prairie and marsh lands of the La Crosse valley in the two northern tiers of sections. If the villages and the temporary residents could be subtracted, we would have a farm population at that date of probably not to exceed 300.

A post office was established in the town in 1854, with Richard Wheldon as first postmaster. The first school was taught for a period of three months in the winter of 1853-54, by William Carl, on the site of the present village of Bangor. The building in which the school was taught was also used as a church. The 1906 plat book for the county of La Crosse shows schools for town 16, range 5, on sections 31, 16, 35, and 12, and churches on sections 1, 3, 5, and 12.

Population Changes.—The early settlers of the town, in addition to the small group of Swiss mentioned, consisted partly of Americans, partly of Europeans. In 1860 more heads of families were of foreign birth than of native. Wales contributed 10, Norway and Baden each 7, Switzerland 3, England 3, Hanover, Saxony, Hess, Württemberg, and Bavaria each 1. Of the native group, New York's contingent was 11, Vermont's 10, and there was 1 each from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and North Carolina. In the count we have included only the farmers (55 in number) and the resident merchants, a mill owner, and a clergyman. The total population at that census period was 751, but a large proportion consisted of railway and other laborers, some of whom were doubtless transients. In 1870 the aggregate population of the town was 1151. By that time, no doubt, the farm population was much more numerous. In 1885, according to the state census, the farm population was 731, which increased to 778 in 1895. Thereafter it declined to 695 in 1905, and to 669 in 1920.

The census taker of 1870 found 680 Americans and 471 foreigners in the town, but there were three times as many foreign families as there were American families. Many children of foreigners, therefore, must appear in the count of natives. In 1885 the Americans numbered 500, the foreigners 222, but the foreign families numbered 91 and the American 78, which shows that the original immigrants were disappearing (probably by death) and their American-born children were heading families of their own. A great change occurred between 1885 and 1895, when the American families dropped to 40 and the foreign increased to 124. This means, no doubt, that many American families emigrated during the decade.
and their farms were purchased by foreigners. The last quarter-century shows a strong tendency toward native supremacy. In 1905 there were 60 American families and only 64 foreign, while in 1920 the native outnumbered the foreign exactly two to one (82 to 41). The total number of foreign born in the town in 1920 was 85. Yet, the names of farm owners are prevailing alien, and the foreign figures mean simply that the present population consists for the most part of the children of the foreign immigrants, with a sprinkling of natives belonging to the older American stock.

Among the foreign elements the Welsh, Germans, and Norwegians are the most important, though the Swiss and also the Irish have had representative families in the town from the beginning and there are a few of other nationalities, as the population chart shows.

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* Village excluded.

**SOCIAL HISTORY OF BANGOR**

**Anna M. Jenkins**

Bangor was first brought under town government as a part of the town of Pierce in 1862. Sections were withdrawn for the organization of different townships until 1856, when its individual organization was effected. It is located in the eastern part of the county and is unsurpassed for the fertility of its well watered and well wooded valleys, such as Dutch Creek, Fish Creek, and The Prairie. Nestling back from these broader valleys are many narrower ones fittingly designated as "coulees" by our own Hamlin Garland.

Early in the history of the state, companies of men looking about for a suitable place in which to begin a home saw these valleys and found them good to look upon. Here they decided to locate and build the home altar to which they could bring their families. Several distinct classes of settlers were among those who found homes in this fair domain—people from the East who were anxious to locate in more sparsely settled regions, natives of Switzerland who immigrated here from Saxon County and directly from Switzerland as well, sturdy Bohemians who had heard of the "promised land" of opportunity and had come to make their homes here, staid Norwegian locating in the deepest coulees because of the homelike appearance of the steep hillsides, and the idealistic Welshmen from the rugged slopes of Wales. Each group built for itself its own type of civilization and drew unto itself all those of like ideas. Today those different types of civilization are blended and merged into a distinctively American town.

Among the Swiss settlers we find such names as Bosshard, Ready, Wolf, Darms, and Zimmerman. Bosshard and Ready settled south of the present site of the village of Bangor in the Dutch Creek valley, and Zimmerman and Darms located claims two and one-half miles east of the village. These settlers brought with them the sturdy honesty and thrift of their forbears in Switzerland, and with them, too, they brought the love of freedom which courses through the veins of every true son of Switzerland. Their industry and thrift made their broad acres blossom as the rose, and today the farms which they developed are pointed out with pride by the descendants of these first settlers. A number of the farms are now owned by the third generation of the family that filed the claim. Later other Swiss families, attracted by the reports of their friends and relatives, came here and located in various parts of the township. Christian and Jacob Hatz, brothers, located on farms in Dutch Creek valley, and their sons, both named John, are prominent in the government of the town and the county.

The first white child born in the township was John Bosshard, son of the original first settler Bosshard. His son, John Bosshard, Jr., is now one of the progressive business men of the village and has served as village president. He tells an incident in the life of his father which pictures the handicaps of pioneer life. In those days bands of Indians roamed about and camped in convenient places on the banks of creeks. One day Baby John was missing. His mother searched for him in his usual haunts, but he was not to be found. Finally the thought of the Indian camp occurred to them, and there they found him. He had strayed out of his mother's sight, and the Indians had picked him up and taken him with them. Otto Bosshard, a brother of John, is a prominent attorney at La Crosse, has served the state as senator at Madison, and in political circles has won for himself an enviable reputation for stirring worth and unwavering loyalty to the state's best interests.

*These Swiss settlers organized a Freethinkers' association which was known as the Concordia Society. This society held a prominent place in the social life of the community for many years, and is still in existence. Concordia Hall, which was dedicated to the use of the society, still stands and is in good repair. The society had its physical training department, the Turners, its musical and dramatic department, and a school in which German and English were taught. The first teacher was a Mr. Copling; later Mr. Steinberger, a scholarly man and a Freethinker, taught the school for many years. Some of his descendants, the Reubaisch family, now live at Mayville, Wisconsin.*

Joseph Hous, a Bohemian, came to Bangor between 1838 and 1860, and built a brewery. After his death his sons carried on his business under the name of the Housa Brewing Company. After the eighteenth amendment was passed the Housa Brewing Company became the Housa Canning Company, and the plant is doing a big business and furnishing work for many people.

Numbers of early Welsh settlers came from the East and others came directly from Wales, settling in what is now the village of Bangor valley and in the Fish Creek valley. William Price bought the claim of Darms, who had settled east of the village, and John Williams bought the claim of C. Buol, who moved to Dutch Creek valley and later located west of the town of Bangor in Hamilton, where the Buol brothers now own acres and acres of the richest farm lands of the county.

John Wheldon was the first settler of the village, locating on a farm upon which, one year later, was laid out the village of Bangor. Later, other additions were made to the village. In casting about for a name for the little settlement, John Wheldon, filled with his love for "Hun Wld Ye Nhrdau" (old land of my fathers), which is every true Welshman's heritage, suggested the name Bangor, and it was at once adopted for town and village alike. The Wheldons, through their efforts, had the first post office opened at Bangor; it was kept in John Wheldon's log house—the first one in the village.

Richard Wheldon, John's youngest brother, was the first postmaster. Later, John Wheldon served as postmaster. It was necessary to have the mail brought across the river from Burns, as the stage route was on the north side of the river. It has been said that the citizens of Bangor made an earnest effort to have the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad locate on the north side of the river, but fortunately for them their efforts were of no avail. The old Wheldon homestead, with beautiful modern buildings, is now owned by Robert and Bronze Wheldon, sons of John, the founder of the village of Bangor.

The second house in the village, also of logs, was built by David J. Jenkins, who arrived in the fall of 1858. In 1854 he and John Wheldon built the flour mill on Dutch Creek, which he ran until 1870. After several changes in proprietorship the mill came into the possession of John Bosshard and remained so until June 11, 1899, when the modest little Dutch Creek rose in its wrath and by a mighty flood washed away the mill and even the site. Both D. J. Jenkins and John Wheldon took an active part in the government of the little hamlet, both in turn holding the offices of town superintendent of schools, clerk, and justice of the peace. Jenkins in this capacity of justice performed many a marriage ceremony, his smallest fee being a half-bushel of turnips. As town superintendent of schools, so the story runs, he had a unique way of determining the qualifications of a teacher. A young man, a candidate for the necessary credentials for teaching, was told to come to the mill office. He promptly did so and spent the afternoon visiting with the genial proprietor of the mill, without, however, any reference being made to the object of his visit. When the young man was about to leave, Mr. Jenkins said, "Well, you'll do all right." The young fellow proved to be a very successful teacher. Such a primitive method of determining the fitness of a candidate is a far cry from the methods of the present day, when the pendulum has swung away from native intelligence and ability to diplomas, certificates, and degrees. When the office of supervising teacher of rural schools was created in the state, the position in La Crosse County was filled by Anna M. Jenkins, a niece of D. J. Jenkins; another niece, Mrs. Blanche J. Chamberlin, is the present county superintendent of schools—the first woman to hold that position in La Crosse County.

Evans, with a family of four sturdy sons, came to the town in 1859 and settled on a claim just west of where the village now stands. This property has never left the family and is now owned by two of his grandsons.

The Welsh people are naturally religious, and early in the history of the village a Welsh Congregational church was founded. This church was the scene of many a soul stirring "Esteddffod," a
festival of song and poetry. This festival attracted the Welsh people from all parts of the county, many of them coming in wagons drawn by ox teams. The rafters of the church rang with the volume of sound that poured from the throats of those Welshmen, born with a natural gift of song. Evan L. Evans, John R. Jones, Edward R. Jones, Evan Jenkins, Thomas Eynon, John Jones (Dr. Jones), David Jones (commonly known as Singor Jones, in order to preserve his identity among so many of the same name), John Davis, David Johns, and many others were among the Welsh settlers who settled in the Fish Creek valley and transplanted a bit of Wales among the hills of La Crosse County. Many of their descendants live upon the farms developed by their ancestors. Dr. Owen Evans, a practicing physician of the village of Bangor, is a son of Evan L. Evans, and another son, Oswald, is postmaster of the village of Rockland in an adjoining township. John Jones, known as Dr. Jones because of his power as a healer of broken bones, handed down his gift to his son, William Jones, who for many years alleviated the sufferings of the afflicted with his oils and ointments. His son, in turn, Dr. Walter Jones, fully equipped with the best training available at home and abroad, brave with degrees and diplomas and possessed of the family gift of healing, is winning for himself fame and fortune in the city of La Crosse.

For a time the Welsh of Fish Creek worshiped with the Bangor Welsh, but later built a Congregational church of their own in Fish Creek. Later a company withdrew from this church and founded the Welsh Presbyterian church, which still holds occasional preaching services. It has been said that the church bells of Fish Creek rang “John Jones, John Evans, John Williams,” but today there are many new settlers in the valley who could not respond to such a summons.

Among the eastern people who settled in the village and town were the Darlings, Elijah Hooper, Arthur Page, and C. W. Mackenzie. Arthur Page bought a farm in Dutch Creek, and two of his sons, Waldo and Willis, have a grain elevator and warehouse in the village. C. W. Mackenzie settled on a claim in 1858, and in 1854 he brought his family to the home which he had built. One of his daughters married Dr. A. B. Newton, the first practicing physician of the village, and his granddaughter Cordelia, Mrs. Grant Rogers, now owns the beautiful farm home which with foresight her grandfather chose from all the acres about him, because of the charming site for a dwelling place. Mrs. A. B. Newton and Emma Mackenzie still live in the village. Abner Darling located in 1855 on a farm in Dutch Creek, and lived there until 1876, when he came to Bangor and became the proprietor of the Bangor House, the second hotel in the village. The first hotel was the Eagle Hotel, run by Henry Johns.

The Bangor Woolen Mills were built and owned by John Sheydt and John Rendy, and for many years did a thriving business. Later Sheydt sold his interest to Otto Bodmer, and the firm kept the name Bodmer and Rendy after Rendy’s death.

From these beginnings—and the persons mentioned are only a part of those who settled in the town and village—has come the present town of Bangor with the incorporated village of the same name. The pretentious, comfortable homes, well tilled fields, and sleek herds of blooded cattle testify to the richness of the soil of the farms and to the prosperity of the farmers. As a result of this prosperity, schools and churches are maintained, and from the six one-room schools of the town come the recruits for the high school which has been established at Bangor village.

The village now has a population of nearly a thousand people. The high school building with its new gymnasium, erected at a cost of approximately $15,000, is the pride of the village and helps in the training of an ever increasing number of young people who are coming to realize that a high school education is the birthright of every American girl and boy.

There are four churches in the village—the Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Baptist. Both town and village are largely Protestant, the Catholic church here being of comparatively recent origin in the town. All churches are in a thriving condition.

The industries of the village are such as will best minister to the needs of the surrounding farming districts. The Hussa Canning Company last year had an output of between 115,000 and 125,000 cases of peas, pickles, and sauerkraut, using about two and three-fourths million cans. Their acreage for the coming year is in the neighborhood of 1130 acres.

The village is equipped with electric lights and a fine sewerage system. Two railroads—the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul, and the Chicago and Northwestern—run through the village, making it really a suburb of La Crosse. These facts make of Bangor a very desirable location, and there are rarely empty houses in the village.