CHAPTER I.

The Settlement of the Community Around Cambridge.

The settlement of the southern part of Wisconsin took place as a result of the general westward movement of population in the early 1840s. The financial panic of 1837 had resulted in the loss of a great deal of property as well as the breaking up of a great many business enterprises, so many people were going West to take up government land and start anew, or to try to establish new business connections in this frontier region. At the same time, the amount of foreign immigration was steadily increasing and finding few opportunities in the Eastern part of the United States, a great many of these foreigners went West.

In this way came the first settler to the Southeastern part of Dane County, Wisconsin to the township of Christiana (then known as Albion), Mr. William M. Mayhew. Prior to the panic he had been merchandizing in the village of Milwaukee for several years. He took up land in section twenty-eight of the town of Christiana during the latter part of 1837, built a commodious loghouse, and for a number of years kept a place of entertainment for travelers.¹

To this same section of the country soon came a number of Norwegian immigrants to settle on government land and to make farm homes for themselves. The first colony of Norwegians to come to America had settled in New York in 1825. In 1836 two

¹ The History of Dane County, Ed. by E. W. Keyes, Vol. II. of Western Historical Ass'n. Series (Madison 1906), p.334.
more shiploads came from Stavanger, Norway. They, most of them, went west to LaSalle County in Illinois in 1837 where they staid for a few years. Then some of them came on to Albion, Dane County Wisconsin 1840-41. Among these latter was one Bjorn Anderson, father of R.B. Anderson a well-known man in this part of the country and one time United States minister to Denmark. Mr. Anderson led this little colony of his friends north from Illinois into Wisconsin to find a more suitable place to settle for he did not like LaSalle County. They found a spot near Lake Koshkonong, Dane County, roughly sixty miles inland, west from Milwaukee, and fifty miles north from the Illinois line. Mr. and Mrs. Anderson was the first couple to settle there, Mrs. Anderson being the first white woman to settle in that whole town.2.

These Norwegian colonists had come to America for very good reasons; they had many of them been very poor and hoped to better their material conditions here.3. Then, too, the common men held the office-holding class in suspicion and did not like their unprincipalled and oppressive ways; they chose to endure hardship rather than oppression.4. Besides there were also religious troubles. A small Quaker Society had been formed in Stavanger in 1816; and in 1804-14 a sect calling themselves Haugians after their leader, Hane Nielson Hauge, had begun to preach against the rationalism and secularization of the Lutheran Church. All these dissenters and semi-dissenters of the state religion were more or less persecuted by those in authority. Thus emigration start-

ed first from Stavanger. From that time on, immigration of this sort increased rapidly, and there were soon more Norwegians in this part of the country than in any other.\(^5\).

Christiana was not established as a separate town from Albion until 1847. It was named by Grunnel Olson Vindeg in honor of the capital of his native land and became very dear to these people in memory of their distant home.\(^6\). These pioneers suffered many hardships in this frontier land. Money was seldom seen, people lived on the products of their little farms. Courage and perseverance were indeed requisites for success in life under such circumstances, and these characteristics most settlers had. So they lived, improving the wild land, buying more acres, working, always working and always hoping for greater success in the future.

At the same time that this settlement was taking place in the town of Christiana, another was springing up on the shores of a small lake about seven or eight miles away and just across the county line into Jefferson County. This lake was about a mile and half long. It's shores were lined with heavy timber. On all sides of the lake the country was quite hilly and the soil exceedingly fine for farming. In the hills off the Southeast end of the lake were many large Indian mounds, a source of much interest to the early settlers as well as to those that came later.

Among the first settlers to settle thereon was a Mr. George Dow of Scotland who was destined to play a great part in

the growth of the community. Several Scotch families, of whom Mr. Dow's was one, had come to America in the late 1830s and 1840. Most of these settled in the East for a few years but planned to go West later. Men were sent on ahead to ascertain the lay of the land and its adaptability for settlement. The shores of this lake were finally decided upon and the men returned to enter the land at the land office at Milwaukee before they did any work on it. Some then returned immediately to start work, just who or how many it is hard to ascertain. 7.

In May 1841, Mr. Dow sent James Stark on from New York to prepare their new home for his family. He went by the usual route, thru the Great Lakes to Milwaukee by steamboat. Passenger rates were ten dollars per person from Buffalo. Both goods and passengers could go cheaper by trading vessel but the weather was generally so unsettled as to make it imprudent to run the risk of a long voyage. By steamboat it took Mr. Stark from May 14 to May 19 to make the journey. 8. The cattle and some goods had been sent by this other route. The goods were loaded on wagons and drawn by the oxen from Milwaukee to the spot chosen for the Dow farm, a three or four days journey. Some of these men that had gone earlier had done a bit of clearing for Mr. Dow, so a little of the work was started before Mr. Stark arrived. He wrote back the following report of the land and the work done: "Your land is all high-lying land covered with oak timber, the greater

7. Material obtained from my father, Daniel Scott, whose father, Robert Scott, was among the first Scotch settlers.
part having the appearance of an old apple orchard somewhat thickly studded with trees. You can drive the wagon and oxen over the greater part of it. There is from fifteen to twenty acres chopped and fenced with a good and sufficient fence..." The ploughing had been poorly done and he considered the crops planted as wasted; so he replanted the ground with corn and potatoes since it was so late in the spring. 9.

All the letters sent back were started "Lake Dow, Wisconsin" for such was the place called for many years. Several other settlers drifted in that summer to do what they could before winter came to get the land ready to plant the next spring and the houses built for their families to occupy. It was a hard task to build a respectable house for flooring and shingles, as well as nails, had to be transported from Milwaukee. Mr. Stark had had to leave his stove pipe, his grindstone and plough in Milwaukee when he made the trip because the load was so heavy and the roads so bad. But they struggled on the best they could. In August Mr. Stark wrote. "Money is scarce here and very useful, no doubt you will want more in this quarter than you anticipated. The returns from farm produce are slow, the emigrants passing by taking most of our surplus." 10.

The Dow family itself did not move west until the spring of 1842. Many other families came with him, my own grandparents among them, and also settled as close to the Lake as possible.

9. Letter from Mr. Stark to Mr. Dow, June 12, 1841, in the Cambridge News, March 16, 1917.
By 1845 the settlement had grown to include about twenty-five families with more coming every year.\textsuperscript{11}

Thus in this way did these two separate communities start and grow. The settlers were all farmers and spent most of their time clearing their land to enlarge their farms. Any considerable surplus that they had to sell was driven overland to Milwaukee, but this trip was too expensive to be made often. Thus their connection with the outside world was slight. Madison was closer to the Norwegian settlement than Milwaukee was, but it consisted of only some eighteen or twenty houses and the inhabitants themselves were mostly farmers so needed little in the way of farm produce. Wheat was the principal crop raised to sell and the nearest grist mill where it could be ground was situated at Whitewater about twenty miles from the Lake Dow settlement and twenty-seven or eight from the other. In short they lived quite independently of anyone else, especially until regular roads were built connecting Madison and Milwaukee over which mail soon came regularly and the trip to Milwaukee made more conveniently.\textsuperscript{12}

Both communities grew rapidly. In 1847 Christiana was established as a separate township occupying all of township six north, range twelve east in the southeast part of the county up to the county line.\textsuperscript{13} It held its first town meeting and election at the house of Neil A. Perry. The following officers

\textsuperscript{11} Interview with my father.
\textsuperscript{12} Letters from Mr. Stark in The Cambridge News, March 23, 1917.
\textsuperscript{13} Keyes, History of Dane County, p. 534.
were elected—William H. Mayhew, chairman; Nicholas T. Holmes, William H. Coon, supervisors; A. Lasher, clerk; N.G. Vanhorn, treasurer; and Samuel H. Coon, assessor. The census of 1850 showed the counties of Dane, Rock, and Racine to have the greatest number of Norwegians in the state. Of these Dane had the largest number, and a large percent of them were found in the towns of Christiana and Albion.

The town is a productive one throughout, the land being for the most part gently undulating stretches of prairie. There is an abundance of water in the town. The streams are the Koshkonong River which enters the town at the present site of Cambridge; Koshkonong Creek in the southern part which has its rise in the smaller streams in the center of the town; and Mud Creek which runs north into the town of Deerfield. Norwegians had settled in this part of the Country so rapidly that by 1850 the entire region was becoming quite sparsely dotted with farms.

In the town of Oakland in which the Lake Dow settlement was located, immigrants came just as rapidly. The entire town is made up of good farm land, more or less hilly. It has in it the two lakes, Dow's Lake and what was then called Snell's Lake, about half the size of the other. The two lakes were only about a mile apart and with the little springs, brooks etc. that run into them, they keep the land around quite well watered. Crops were good and settlers came rapidly in the forties. In the western part were the Scotch and the Yankees, while in the

eastern half many Germans were filtering in.

Immigration from Germany had begun on a large scale from 1847, though a good many had reached this part of the country before then. The same general causes were forcing these people out of their Fatherland as forced most settlers away, religious troubles, political oppression, and wide-spread hard time. 17. Wisconsin opened its government land at an opportune moment for these people, so many of them came west to settle there. 18. The towns of Jefferson, Waterloo, Lake Mills, Aztalan, Hebron, and even Watertown were thickly populated with Germans, all of them to the east and north of the settlement in Oakland. 19. But each year they kept coming farther west and settling on their farms nearer and nearer to the Lake. Another colony went in South of the Lake and settled. Thus the whole town of Oakland was quite rapidly inhabited though of course sparsely as compared to today.

The first town meeting was held as early as 1843, April 4, at the home of Gerrad Crane of that town. The following persons were elected and took the oath of office: Supervisors, Alonzo Horten, chariman, Edmond Butts, and Erastus Snell, Town clerk-Nelson B. Horton, Town treasurer-Holmes Ives, Town assessors-Holmes Ives and Gerrad Crane, three highway commissioners, three common school commissioners, two town constables, one collector, one sealer of weights, and one overseer of highways. 20.

17. Schafer, History of Agriculture in Wisconsin, p. 52.
The town meetings were held regularly after that year and the town has always been well organized. Very few of the German immigrants took a share in the town government because they could speak so little English, but they lived, worked, and learned from their English-speaking neighbors and in due time took up their share of their duties. So this part of the country too, became more widely cultivated and settled until one passing through on the Madison-Milwaukee road 1850-5 would gain the general impression that this section of the country was well occupied by farmers.