A Fountain Head of Norwegian-American History
The Old Even Hansen Heg Farm as it looks today — Situated on Highway 36, about a mile and a quarter from Heg Memorial Park. Now owned by Henry Schubel. Waterford Post Staff Photo.

EARLY NORWEGIAN SETTLEMENTS IN AMERICA

Norway has given to America, through immigration, a larger percentage of her population than any other country except Ireland. These Norwegian immigrants brought with them to our country “the heritage of generations of thrifty folk, accustomed to hard work, generally literate, respecters of property, believers in a democratic government, religious, aggressive and independent.”

Kleng Peerson is generally credited with being the first Norwegian to emigrate to the United States. He visited America as early as 1821.

Briefly, these early Norwegian settlements were:

1. 1825—The Kendall settlement in Orleans County, New York, founded by the famous “Sloopers” who set sail from Stavanger on July 4th or 5th and landed in New York on October 9th.

2. 1834—The Fox River settlement in La Salle County, Illinois, founded by Kleng Peerson.

3. 1836—Chicago.

4. 1838—The Jefferson Prairie settlement, founded by Ole Nattestad, first Norwegian settler on Wisconsin soil,
who located in Clinton Township, in Rock County.

5. 1839—Muskego, in Waukesha and Racine Counties. This fifth Norwegian settlement in the United States, the second in Wisconsin, was destined to become of the most historic interest. Of its importance in American history, Hjalmar R. Holand says:

"Out of old Muskego came many great men and many great memories. Here in this Telemarken settlement, amid rather poor and unhealthful surroundings, was laid the cornerstone of many of the larger institutions, spiritual movements and material undertakings which are now the pride of the Norwegian-Americans. Here the Northmen first began to take their part in American politics and American life. Here came back the answering cry of the Norwegians when called to help in the Civil war, in which they so loyally and honorably defended their adopted land. Here began the educational movement whose fruit is now seen in many great educational institutions. Here was organized the first Norwegian congregation. From here went out the first call for a Norwegian minister. Here was built the first Norwegian church. Here was issued the first Norwegian newspaper." (De Norske Settlementers Historie—1908).

Photo by courtesy of Warner Studios.
View in Heg Memorial Park showing driveways, picnic benches, the Heg Park museum, and the beautiful shade trees.