IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

THE FIRST SURVEY
Few white men had seen what is now the Town of Norway until the government contracted for a survey of the boundaries of the township in 1835. These boundaries were surveyed in December of 1835.

On December 1, 1835, Elisha Dwelle contracted for the division of the interior of the township. With his chainmen and his marker, Dwelle started on May 1 and completed the job on May 16, 1836. The surveyors received $2.75 for each mile surveyed. Posts and mounds which these men erected determine the boundaries of all real estate in the town. In 1873, the original markers were replaced with substantial limestone monuments.

Map from Elisha Dwelle’s survey notes, 1836
Dwelle's survey notes include references to the kind of land he observed. He found the region to be of broad, low, timbered uplands, prairies and considerable lowland areas of peat and swamp. He found the uplands thinly timbered with black, red, burr, and white oak. The natural drainage was poor.

Dwelle's notes also hint at the Indian occupation. He mentions entering an "Indian Clearing" between Sections 31 and 32. He also placed a marker at an "Indian Wigwam" in Sections 19 and 20. Also mentioned and drawn on the original survey map are Indian trails existing at that time. Although the treaty which ended the Blackhawk War in Wisconsin in 1833, provided for the removal of the Indian population to an area west of the Mississippi, some Indians did remain in the area and continued to use the land that had been theirs for centuries.

LAND SALE AND SETTLEMENT
The survey opened the township to the first sale of land by the government in the spring of 1839. Public auction was held in Milwaukee and the land was sold for $1.25 an acre. There had been settlers in the area before this official land sale. These "squatters" cleared land and built homes. There is no official record of who they were or where they settled. The old log cabin which was reconstructed in Heg Park was supposedly erected by Eliphalet Cramer in 1837 in Section 19.

Cramer Cabin, Heg Park
The first permanent settler of record was Thomas Drought of Irish descent. In 1838, he and his sister drove a pair of oxen from Canada and located in the northeast quarter of Section 12. In 1838, James Ashe and George Drought also entered tracts in Section 1. These early settlers bought their land in 1839, when the government land office was opened.

NORwegian SETTLEMENT
In the fall of 1839, a group of forty immigrants, led by John Nelson Luraas of Tinn, Norway, were persuaded by Milwaukee merchants to settle near Muskego Lake instead of Illinois as they originally intended. The following spring, however, they found the low lying, swampy land to be flooded. Some of the Norwegians, including Luraas, eventually moved south and west to the Town of Norway and other areas to find more workable lands.

Two other Norwegians from Drammen, Norway, Soren Bache and Johannes Johannesen, had spent the summer of 1839 looking for developable land close to their fellow countrymen. Hearing of the Luraas group and feeling the land southwest of Milwaukee would be a good investment, they came in the spring of 1840 to look it over. As Bache states in his diary, Chronicle of Old Muskego, "...we had heard that about three miles south of here there was very good land not yet sold. Finding it even beyond our expectations, we decided to buy a piece which lay between two lakes well stocked with fish."

Bache and Johannesen purchased around 240 acres of land from the government, which they later resold to other immigrants. They lived in a sod hut for a short time and then built a more permanent home in an Indian mound near Waubeesee Lake. The following is an excerpt from the diary of Soren Bache:

"Our first job now was to build a house. We had decided to make use of a mound out on a fine plot of ground with good drainage in all directions. Johannesen and I had already started working, and with the aid of Heg and his
companions the job was soon completed. The mound was so large that by excavating down to the level of the surrounding ground we got a room twenty-four feet long, eighteen-feet wide, and seven-feet high. This first story was entirely underground. Over it we built a loft five logs high which rested on six pillars about seven feet in height. The walls of our dugout were so firm that there was no danger of a cave-in, and we merely needed to provide it with a wainscot in order to get a good, warm dwelling. On one side of the main room we excavated a kitchen, which also was provided with boarded walls and a roof resting on pillars. Considering the circumstances, we now have a house which for comfort surpasses our expecta-
tions.

Soren Bache’s Hut, originally located on east shore of Waubeesee Lake. Photo taken about 1949 on Fries farm

"The mound proved to be an Indian grave. At the bottom we found twelve or fourteen skulls and some other bones which indicated that these had been tall people. By now these burial customs have doubtless been discarded. In the past, however, the Indians are supposed to have used this manner of burial for those killed in battle - an indication that they were formerly more enlightened in some ways than they are at present. Judging by these customs, they must have had a culture similar to that of pagan times in our own country, as is witnessed by the big mounds in Norway which can, in some ways be compared to this one. There are many such mounds here, undoubtedly all burial places primarily for warriors. Many bodies were piled up on the ground and then covered with earth
The Mattias Ingebratson House, still used as a residence by Mr. and Mrs. Art Showers. Mrs. Showers is a descendent of Mattias Ingebratson
to the height already mentioned. It was evident that the earth had been brought some distance. This particular mound must have been built many years ago, because fairly-sized oak trees, the largest twelve or fourteen inches in diameter, were growing on it."

THE HEG GROUP
Influenced by Bache and Johannesen, a group arrived that fall from Drammen, Norway and also settled in Norway Township. This group was under the leadership of Even Heg, a former innkeeper near Drammen.

Bergen Cabin. Once on Malchine farm, a portion is now shown in the Racine County Historical Museum, Racine.
The stormy trip from Norway experienced by these new immigrants on an iron cargo ship had taken eleven weeks. An interesting episode of this voyage is related in "Historic Heg Memorial Park," a booklet written by Ella Colbo in 1940.

"Among the passengers was Tosten Kleven, a lad of sixteen. When the sailing vessel was a few hours out of New York harbor he was stricken with the black plague, given up for dead and preparations were made for his burial at sea. The Even Heg family intervened and were given permission to bury their young friend on land. They took him to the establishment of a New York undertaker. Here he awakened from the coma which had been mistaken for death, and though it was some time before he fully recovered his health, he lived to become seventy-four years of age. At the age of nineteen, he helped build the first church."

The trip to the new land was a long, dangerous journey. The ocean crossing, by sailing vessels crammed with immigrants and their belongings, was a 10 to 16 week journey or more, depending on the weather. Upon arrival in America, few immigrants could speak the language. They had to arrange travel from New York by river and canal to Buffalo, and then by steamer or sail boat to Milwaukee. The trip from Milwaukee to the settlement was a long day's journey on a hard, strange trail.

The immigrants were a brave people. They left family and friends back in their homeland. They came with only the bare necessities, leaving many of their possessions behind because of the limited space aboard ship. They came to a new land, rich only in the strength of their hope and faith and their ability to hew a home out of the wilderness.

POVERTY AND HARDSHIPS
Of the Norwegian immigrants, Even Heg, Johannesen, and especially Soren Bache were men of means and bought several sizable tracts of land. They sold the land in small
parcels on favorable terms to poorer settlers. Many of these immigrants were very poor and the poverty of the Norwegians seems to have been responsible for the division of land into small tracts.

An American clergyman who visited a Muskego cabin in 1844 wrote: "Aside from the tea kettle, we saw but one article of furniture and that a wooden bowl partly filled with what I took to be shorts, kneaded and prepared for baking. This, as near as I could learn, was all they had in the house to support life."

The new settlers found many hardships— their poverty, uncleared lands, inadequate housing, a strange language, and recurring diseases that often struck the community. There were continuous fevers and illnesses from cholera, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, and malaria. The death toll was appalling. The fact that they did not dig wells accounted for the contaminated water which they drank. Three major cholera epidemics nearly eliminated the entire settlement. The summer of 1849 was described by a settler as "the awfulest summer I have ever experienced." Another said: "We had all we could do to carry them out of the houses and haul them to the graves with our oxen, while others dig the graves."

Following is a translation of a letter written by Anders Klove to his mother in Norway. It shows the remarkable fortitude of the new settlers. The original is in the possession of Mrs. Charlotte Elliott of Cherry Valley, Illinois, a great granddaughter of Anders Klove. Mr. Klove settled on the land south of the parsonage. This letter is taken from the "Old Muskego Saga," a church paper.
December 22, 1843

Anders Klove
Racine County, Wisconsin

Dear Mother:

You must not be worried, dear unforgettable mother, that I have waited so long before you and also my other relatives hear how I and my family have been getting along since we came to America.

The 29th of July last, I sent a letter from New York to our brother-in-law, David Lemme, in which I told how we had fared while crossing the ocean; also about our stay in New York, which I hope he has received. I will, however, repeat the following:

We had been three weeks on the ocean and had come a good way past the Shetland Islands, there broke out an epidemic of typhoid fever. Two of my children died on the ocean of the disease, Ingelbright and Karl.

We arrived in New York, July 13, when 20 of our company were brought to the hospital, five of whom were my children. We stayed in New York until July 29 and during that time our daughter Ingeberg died, also Nels Dragsvold died. We left New York July 29 at 7 P.M. by way of steamboat and arrived at Albany the 30th. The 31st of July we left on a canal boat drawn by two horses and came to Buffalo August 7th. The 10th we boarded a steamboat and went on the Erie Canal to Milwaukee; came there the 14th and the 15th, we arrived here in Muskego, Racine County, Wisconsin. Here I have purchased a piece of land.

There has this summer and fall been a great epidemic of ague and fever which has not only taken hold of the Norse, but also the native American and many have died. The 5th of December our little Britta died of ague, so you can understand we have had much sorrow, which has been our lot since we left Voss. Heavy as our sorrow has been, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."
But not this alone, but the day our daughter died, my wife took sick and daughter Christine about the same time, and three weeks later our son Andrew took sick and they have been sick till now. I thought they were more likely to die than live, which made it look pretty dark for me.

Except for our sorrow having so many of our children die, I and family are well pleased in having come to America. If the Lord will bless us with health, I think life will be pleasanter and easier here than in Norway.

Now I must tell you about my business investments here in Racine County. The day we left Milwaukee I happened to lodge that night with a man named Even Heg from Drammen, Norway. This man already knew me by name and wished I would settle in this neighborhood. He directed me to a man from Hedemarkgen, who wished to sell his land. This farm, being one and half miles from Even Heg's place and 20 miles from Milwaukee and about the same distance from Racine and 1,450 miles from New York. I therefore went to look at it and found it some what like what I would like to have and within a few days bought the property which consists of 100 acres of land, of which 60 acres were enclosed with fence and eight or nine acres which had been broken. I sowed six acres of winter wheat this fall. The house I can hardly call more than one room. There is also a dairy barn, but not according to what I would like to have. Since there was quite a bit of improvements on the place, it was therefore somewhat expensive. I paid 425 dollars for the property. I purchased another 40 acres for which I paid 150 dollars. On this there is also a small house and some fence and ground broken. I have enough timber for our use and will have some wood to sell. I have earlier bought a team of driving horses for $48, two milk cows for $24, five lambs for $6, twelve hogs for $19. I have butchered four hogs for which I paid $4. One of these weighed 650 pounds and the hide 96 pounds. The price of feed is somewhat higher now than it was in the fall. A barrel of flour costs $2, a barrel of wool 36¢. I can also let you know we have a Norwegian preacher by the name of Claus Clausen, who is an extraordinarily able and good man. He lives with Even
and Johannes Heg. He also holds services in their living room. The services are conducted exactly in the same manner as we had them in Norway. He also has begun to instruct a class of children in the catechism for confirmation, but my children have not started yet. The pastor thought they had better wait till they get stronger after having been sick for so long. The pastor has visted us several times. His land joins into mine, so he will be my nearest neighbor. My nearest neighbor will then be about the distance as I had at Klove farm in Voss, Norway.

Eight days ago today the Norse here in this settlement had a meeting at Even Heg's to see what could be done about organizing a congregation. There were 100 men who signed their names as charter members. There were four men of Racine County and four of Milwaukee County elected who were to meet soon and decide what the minister's salary should be, also see about building a church. I, too, had the honor of being one of this committee. The church is to be built near the cemetery we already have and my home will be right near the church.

May the Lord be with you, dear mother and brothers and sisters, also the relatives and friends. King's greetings and may you all have a blessed New Year.

Your beloved son,
Anders Klove