The casual observer living now in Outagamie County and judging from the life about him which he witnesses every day, would most certainly conclude that German is and has been the dominant racial group in the county. But this is contradicted by the very earliest records of the settlement of this region and strangely enough, the very first permanent settlers, with the exception of a few French families, the Beaulieus, the Grignons, the St. Louises in and about Kaukauna, and the Grignons at Appleton; were from New England, New York, Ohio, and a few from Pennsylvania.

FRENCH AND YANKEE

Of course, the first were the French who became permanent traders along the Fox River and later a few French who became farmers. New England and New York furnish a large contingent of the early population of Appleton, drawn there by the college and by the presence of a group of cultured easterners. Yet, throughout the county with the exception of the Town of Cicero, everywhere the "Yankee" seems to be first, setting up those enterprises necessary in the pioneer life of a new frontier. Sawmill projects, flour mills and most other industrial beginnings are in the hands of people whose names are Horton, Anderson, Clark, Atkinson, Smith and Packard. The names reflect this state of affairs in such towns as Appleton, Hortonville, Seymour, Medina, and Mackville.

IRISH

The Irish, driven from their homes in Ireland by the famines of the late 1840's, were attracted by the possibilities of work on the waterpower projects along the Fox River and came to the neighborhood of Appleton in 1849 and the early 1850's in such numbers that by 1856 a small town called "New Dublin" was formed somewhere between Appleton and Menasha. Some of these Irish workers settled in Appleton, in the old Third Ward, and became the nucleus of a later Irish quarter in Appleton. The congregation of St. Mary Catholic Church was formed from these immigrants and the few French and later some German families who came to Appleton. Distinct Irish settlements developed early in the Town of Freedom where by 1849 a small Irish
Catholic community is found. The Town of Center had among its early settlers a group of Irish who had come from Ohio: the Hennesseys, McIlhones and the Mc Gillans to mention but a few. Deer Creek had early Irish groups and throughout the rest of the county small groups of Irish farmers and workers infiltrate in the course of the next thirty or forty years. A few isolated Scotch groups are to be found in Appleton, Greenville and Hortonia in the early 1850’s but never in the numbers in which the Irish appeared.

GERMAN AND DUTCH

For Outagamie County the most significant migrations began in the 1850’s and the life of the county has been profoundly influenced by these groups which began pouring into the wilderness from 1850 to 1880. They are the Germans and the Hollanders who still hold numerical superiority over any and all other racial groups of our county.

After the Revolution of 1848 not many of the refugees from Germany penetrated as far north as Outagamie County. Many settled in Illinois and some in and near Milwaukee, Watertown, Dodge County, and the immediately surrounding territory. Shortage of food in north Germany (the low-German areas of Pomerania and Mecklenburg, particularly) drove out many of the inhabitants who found a new home in northern Wisconsin, in the wilderness of Outagamie County. We do find a few German names in 1849, 1850 to 1855 in Appleton, in Dale (some Pennsylvania Germans, also), in Ellington, in Center, in Freedom and in Osborn. It is not until after the Civil War that the newer townships of Seymour, Black Creek and Cicero begin to fill up with new German immigrants, many of whom stopped a few years in Dodge and Washington counties before venturing into the wilderness where they were to carve out great farms by their hard work and patience. Germans are to be found in all the towns of Outagamie County but the central townships and the newer northern townships were most thickly settled by them because they still represented cheap and good land.

The second important and almost spectacular migration was that of the Hollanders under the inspiration and leadership of Father Van den Broek at Little Chute. In 1848 while he was in Holland
he persuaded a large number of families to leave their homes in Hertogenbosch, Noord Brabant, and to find a better life in the little town where he had started a mission among the Indians. In 1848 a large group came to Little Chute and in the 1850's other groups followed to make the foundation of what is the community of Little Chute, the Town of Vandenbroek and part of the Town of Buchanan. More than any other racial group in the county, these Hollanders have kept up their national traditions due probably to their close unity under the influence of their church and due to the coming of new colonists from time to time and the frequent visits by families of Little Chute to their relatives in the "old country." They have managed to keep language, customs and religious traditions remarkably well in spite of automobiles and radio. A few Hollanders are found in Freedom, Center, Kaukauna and Grand Chute but the great concentration is in Little Chute and Kimberly.

In 1890 and a few years previous to that the last German colony entered the country. In the northeastern part of the Town of Seymour, still owned by the estate of ex-Governor Horatio Seymour of New York, a few sections of land remained unsold. A group of Bavarian farmers were induced to come over and to take up these lands, where for a time they developed a community comparable to Little Chute and the Hollanders. But in the last two decades the influence of the modern age has broken down the distinctly "colony" features of the settlement and soon Isaar will be merely another strange and little understood name in the county.

EASTERN EUROPEANS

The great migrations of Poles and Bohemians scarcely touch Outagamie County. Poles are to be found in the cities where they worked in papermills and in other types of industrial plants. In the country, however, they are rare. But in neighboring Shawano County which was later in development and also poorer than Outagamie County, great colonies of Poles were brought in to take up cheap lands.
the racial fabric of the county. A small group of Indiana people, evidently a part of the Quaker group that settled in the Town of Freedom, has not left much trace of itself. The Siddons, the Trotters, Coxes and Bales have disappeared without leaving their names or their religion in any recognizable form today. They appeared rather early (1848) and it is likely that some of them moved on farther west to the prairies because clearing the Wisconsin land was a hard task. In the same manner a small colony of settlers from Ohio, known as the “Buckeye farmers” near Hortonville does not remain long in that area. They move on to the west where presumably land was easier to clear. Another little group of French families, apparently connected with the Mormon church that existed for about ten years in the Town of Black Creek, came and went also with the exception of the Felio families who remained in the town.

Although migration from Canada seems unusual there are some recorded cases of groups of families coming generally from the province of Ontario to Outagamie County. Some are English, there are a few Scotch, some Irish and a few Germans settling in different localities in the county. In 1864 a group of English and Scotch Canadians took up land in the Town of Osborn and Seymour. The Sherman families and the Heagles are descendants of those Canadian families. In the Town of Greenville a number of German families migrated from Berlin, Ontario or the region about Berlin (now called Kitchener) and settled in Greenville in 1861 and 1862 to become a part of the prosperous farming community.

There have been very few negroes in the county. One of the oldest and almost legendary settlers was a negro named Jackson. He claimed to have lived in the Town of Freedom since 1830 which he had thus named out of gratitude for his escape from slavery. A negro family or two in Appleton during the years between 1865 and 1910 account for practically all of the negro population of the county.

The great communities of Hofa Park, Pulaski and Sobieski have influenced life in a small degree by their trade and other relations with such towns as Seymour where the Poles came to sell their cows and pigs, in order to buy sugar, flour and clothing. “Fair days” in Seymour in the 1890’s and early 1900’s were strongly Polish.

The Danes and Norwegians came to Wisconsin too late to find much good land left for them to buy. In 1876 we find a small Danish settlement in the Town of Deer Creek with such names as Hans Olson, Albertson, Larsen, Nelson, etc. Likewise in the Town of Maine a small group of Danes and Norwegians have continued to live and to farm up to the present. But there are no large colonies of Scandinavians within the borders of Outagamie County.

THE “STATES” AND CANADA

Some interesting odd groups might be mentioned to complete the picture of
Since 1890 when the peak of the German and Dutch migrations was passed there were, of course, small additions to the foreign-born population of the county and in the course of 60 years between 1880 and 1940 many of the older foreign-born have died. Their descendants classed naturally as Americans, U. S. citizens, are no longer distinguished from older American of longer American lineage. The United States census of 1940 gives us interesting statistics on the population of Outagamie County. Out of population of 69,065 there were 3,556 foreign-born (1,926 males and 1,630 females). The distribution of these foreign-born follows the pattern of the early groups from 1865 on through the 1890’s, viz., a large preponderance of German and Dutch. The 1940 census gives us these statistics on foreign born in Outagamie County: English, 67; Wales, 2; Norway, 57; Netherlands, 714; Switzerland, 23; Germany, 1,685; Mexico, 2; Central and South America, 6; Irish, 33; Scotch, 42; Sweden, 36; Belgium, 88; France, 9; Canada French, 11; Canada other, 164; Australia, 2; Czech, 66; Austria, 144; Denmark, 65; Luxembourg, 10; Poland, 73; Cuba and West Indies, 3; others not classified, 3.

There were also five negroes listed for the county and 952 Indians who came into the county when the lands were allotted and the Town of Oneida was formed in 1910. The picture from the above statistics remains the profile of the population picture after 1870 when the German element probably was even higher in its percentage of the total population. If one takes into account the first and second generation descendants of these Germans and Hollanders, it is probable that the profile would be the same. For the sake of completeness, other small groups which the census reveals are added: Hungary, 37; Latvia, 2; Bulgaria, 1; Spain, 1; Jugoslav, 9; Lithuania, 15; Roumania, 4; Italy, 13; other Europe, 9; Russia, 130; Finland, 7; Greece, 28; Portugal, 9; Palestine-Syria, 9; Asiatic Turkey, 1; Chinese, 3. With the exception of Russia, Hungary and Greece the nations here represented have contributed very small numbers to the picture of the foreign-born of the county.

One might cite here a curious bit of information, not too reliable which came out of a church survey in Appleton in 1898. It is for Appleton only and, as has been mentioned, lays no claim to authenticity. In a religious survey the number of families in the various churches was counted. Of these families 742 were American; 1526 were German; 212, Irish; 59, French; 78, English; 40, Dutch; 17, Danish; 16, Scandinavian; 31, Scotch; 10, Belgian.

The general conclusions on the basis of facts and figures, are that first New Englanders, New Yorkers, some English, and Scotch opened up the county; Germans and Hollanders did the hard work of clearing lands and although many have later gone into business and industry, a great number of them remain tillers of the soil.