The Settlement: The First Norwegian Lutheran Settlement In Montana

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THE SETTLEMENT

The First Norwegian Lutheran Settlement In Montana

Michele Van Cleve
Carroll College
Helena, Montana
March 21, 1963
PREFACE

A timothy-hidden cemetery, rotting with age, in a field of cattle on a peaceful August day—1962. How can this be connected, even remotely with the strife, the policies that caused political turmoil, and the religious apprehension that characterized Norway in the latter part of the nineteenth century? Why are these graves crumbling so far from the homeland of their occupants and what of their descendants? Have they all become shadowy figures in the settling dust of the American West? This is that half-forgotten history of a home-loving people who died half-way around the world from their native hearths. These Norwegian immigrants settled along Billy Creek close to the Sweet Grass River in southwestern Montana, but it was the Crazy Mountains rising starkly into the sky that reminded them most of their fatherland. The stretches of level prairie, the buttes, the rolling hills, and the creeks with their natural brush shelters were quickly adopted by the settlers as their own.

The author became interested in them for a number of reasons. Her great-grandfather, Paul L. Van Cleve, Sr., moved to Montana, and more particularly, Porcupine Butte on the Sweet Grass River, just four miles north of the Norwegian
Settlement in the early 1880's. His only son married and settled a mile south of the Settlement. This alone would probably have been sufficient incentive to write the paper, but beyond that Paul Jr. had a daughter, Charlotte, the author's aunt who married Torvald Anderson, the grandson of Knute Anderson, one of the first settlers.

For the story of these settlers, then, the author is deeply indebted not only to her own family, but to the following people as well:

Sverre Untsed who spent the greater part of the summer of 1962 corresponding with the author to fill in the blank spots on the emigrants; Ben Olness, Mrs. Clara Liebel, Mrs. Eva Roquet, Mrs. Green and Reverend Johnson who were more than willing to aid the author by means of numerous interviews and the loan of any pertinent books and letters. Thanks should also be extended to the descendants of these settlers who were a great source of information to the author in everyday living.
To Dad
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CHAPTER I

Introduction and Background

In the year 1883 the territory of Montana was a part of the frontier. As such it held promises of gold, land, and freedom. To this typical "land of promise" in the period of western expansion came two brothers in 1876, the centennial of the Declaration of Independence. With them were Coleman Puett and his wife. In 1877, they settled on the Sweet Grass, including the present Franklin Place by Melville, a small town located twenty-five miles north of Big Timber. George Cook settled a mile up the creek in 1879 on land which the author's father later owned. He sold it in 1949, and it is now owned by Leo J. Cremer, Jr.

But the most significant factor in the development of this section of Montana occurred in 1863 with the arrival of the first Norwegian immigrants. Soon to be followed by their relatives, these sturdy, industrious people established the first Norwegian settlement in Montana. So definite were its characteristics that it became known throughout the territory, and is still identified today, simply as the "Settlement".

1. Their names are lost. I could only discover that they came with the Puetts.
Located a third of the way up the Norwegian coast and fourteen miles from Oslo is Trondheim [sic] on Trondheim Fjord, the ancient capital and northern-most railroad of Norway. The people there are industrious farmers and fishermen; a contented, peaceful people. But in the last half of the nineteenth century a political dispute raged between Norway and Sweden over joint sovereignty and the question of which country should have the ruler. This joint rule ended on July 18, 1873, when Oscar II was crowned in Trondheim as the successor to Charles XV. The liberals under Sverdrup were disgruntled about the house of representatives, called the office of storthing. This political difficulty was aggravated by the passage of a new church law in 1887, concerning the ties between the government and the state. As the church and government were closely connected, this law was disputed by various factions so that three parties evolved from the law. They fought until 1889 when the conservatives, under Emil Stand, took control of the government. These unsettled conditions, as well as the over-population of Norway, prompted many to leave Norway. Due to the idea of the "land of promise" and the easy immigration laws, these people made the logical choice and emigrated to America. From New York they went directly to Minnesota. This choice of a location was greatly influenced by Colonel Hans

Mattson, who invited Scandinavians to emigrate to Minnesota. He was vitally interested in increasing the population which had been decimated by the Indian Wars in Minnesota, the Sibley Massacre of 1862 in particular. He gave them quite a sales pitch concerning the climate and conditions of Minnesota, comparing them favorably to those of Norway. By 1880 he had done such a successful job that out of a total population of 597,407 there were 88,325 Scandinavians in Minnesota.

Most of the original Norwegian settlers who are alleged to have come from Trondjhem actually came from Byneset, a rural district bordering the town of Trondjhem. Through Sverre Utseth and the Norwegian historian Arnt Froseth, who lives at Bosber, Byneset, I have obtained much of the following information.

Knut Anderson was married to Maren Torgersdatter Eggen, born about 1845. They had a daughter, Anne, born December 11, 1870. Knut emigrated at the age of twenty-one, on the steamship "Norway" from Trondjhem on April 21, 1870. His destination was La Crosse, Wisconsin. In Liverpool, England, he took another ship across the Atlantic. The fare amounted to 53 spesiedaler and 1 ort, for which I could find no English equivalent. Knut himself was born in 1849 in Byneset, on the farm Hangeras. His parents were Mons Ander-

3. Ibid. p. 42
sen Handeraas and his wife Gurine Johnsdatter.

Henry Ellingson was born in 1846 on the farm Gausstad in Byneset (Tomasstue, i.e. Cottage of Tomas). He was married to Gina Hansdatter. They emigrated to the United States on May 26, 1866. The parents of Henry Ellingson were Elling Olsen Gaustad, born in 1808 in Byneset and his wife Gjertrud Herniksdatter Langorgen, born in 1813 in Buvik, Sor-Trondelag. Henry Ellingson and his wife Gina had the following children: Edvard Harris, Susanna, Gjertine, George, Herbert, Emma, Karoline, Oskar, and Johannes. They settled in Melville Park, Montana.

Peter H. Becken was born in the United States by parents of Norwegian origin, probably from Gudbrandsdalen, Norway. His wife, Oline Olsdatter Rostad, was born on the farm Hoyem in Byneset about 1869. It is believed that her parents came from Gudbrandsdalen and that they were tenants or leasers of a small area of land under the Hoyem farm. Oline had a very large number of sisters and brothers. A number of her brothers emigrated to America; as did her brother Isak Olsen Sostad who emigrated from Byneset on April 24, 1879 and went to live in Castle Meager, Montana. There he married Marit Sivertsdatter Froseth from Byneset; she lived in White Sulphur Springs, Meager, Montana.

Joseph Dahl seems to have been J. Margido Dahl.

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4. This was later shortened to Melville.
He was born about 1848 and emigrated in May of 1870 with his wife Anne Lerdal, born about 1848 in Byneset. The birthplace of J. Margido Dahl and his home in Byneset are not known. He and his wife emigrated on a sailing ship. The ships from Trondjhem sailed directly to Quebec and from there the emigrants went on along the Great Lakes to the Mid-west. Travel across the Atlantic could take a short or a long time, depending on the wind. For J. Margido Dahl and his wife Anne the trip took thirteen weeks, and it is said that upon arriving at Quebec all the ship's provisions were gone. They settled at Melville Park, Montana.

Ole Clausen and his wife did not come from Byneset and as the emigration list contains over nine thousand names a year it would be a rather difficult task to locate them. If they did emigrate from Byneset, it was under an alias.

The family named Fallan came from Byneset. It was after they reached the United States that they added the "g". On May 21, 1879, Ole Eriksen Fallan, who was born on the farm Fallan, Byneset in 1848, emigrated to Helena, Montana. It is thought that P. O. Fallang must have come from the same locality, although no definite information is available.

Sverre Utseth had this to say for the emigrants:

The emigrants from Norway were poor people. As a rule one can say they went to the USA in order to work their way to a living and a future they could see no possibility of reaching at home in Norway. The emigrants were the strongest people, and the ones who
possessed the highest aspirations. After their arrival in America they might, in the beginning, live in earthen huts or else in a miserable way; but by hard work and industry most of the emigrants earned themselves a fair living. They took part in the construction of America and added to the young American nation a number of good, honest people. Those who remained in Norway owe their emigrated kinsmen a great debt of gratitude for the favorable reputation those adventurous souls have established in this country.

The men in whom we are interested settled in Rushford. Here again was encountered political difficulties under the Pillsbury regime. This regime was in control of Minnesota in 1881. This group of men who had banded together in an attempt to run Minnesota made a mistake in that their law-making policies were piecemeal so there was no real order. Coupled with the results of the grasshopper invasion of 1879 and the disappointment experienced with the land in Minnesota, most of the Rushford Norwegian group moved again; this time to Montana. They settled five miles west of what was then known as Melville Park, which has since been shortened to Melville and is now smaller than it was on their arrival.

The following is an account of the trip west as told by Mrs. O. J. Ellingson:

"It was hot and dusty and the horses went so slowly...Momma wouldn't let us get down and walk or run beside the wagon. We'd been told about Indians and outlaws. But we didn't see any...Most fun on the trip was ferrying across the Yellowstone. We did that three times."

These are the recollections of Mrs. George Rostad of Big Timber. The trip she talked of to her
sister-in-law, Mrs. O. J. Ellingson of Big Timber, was accomplished in mid-summer eighty-one years ago. It was August, 1881.

In the horse-drawn wagons were Mrs. Rostad, then Susanna Ellingson; her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ellingson, who'd been pioneers in Minnesota before they headed West; Susanna's brothers, Edwin and George; a sister, Emma; Mrs. Ellingson's brother, Pete Becken, and a Mr. and Mrs. Ole Classen.

Also in the wagons were the worldly goods the Ellingsons and Classens owned. That included the Ellingson's cook stove, a huge black, cumbersome contraption that was lifted from the wagon each night.

"Mama had yeast," Mrs. Rostad recalled. "Each night the men lifted the stove out. We children would help gather wood for a fire. And Mama would bake bread. She baked bread for all of us each night clear across the country from Minnesota to Montana's Sweetgrass country." Mam, no doubt, kept her eye on that starter as much as she did her children.

The Ellingsons, natives of Norway, were married in Wisconsin and lived in Rushford, Minnesota, a few years.

They went by wagon from Rushford to St. Paul. Then they took a train to Sentinel Butte, North Dakota, end of track in those days. From there the journey was by covered wagon to a home site on a stream called Billy Creek. It meandered between the Crazy Mountains on the west and the Cayuse Hills on the east.

It took a month and three crossings of the Yellowstone to get to the site, Mrs. Rostad remembers.

The wagons were shelter until a log house with a sod roof was built. Furniture was made on the spot and Mrs. Rostad remembered that "it was used for years and years afterward".

The family lived on the ranch twenty-five years. The first year there another son, Oscar J., was born. It was an occasion for a settlers' celebration. As far as was known to the settlers living north of the ranch in a community called Settlement and later incorporated with Melville, Oscar J. was the first white child to be born east of the Crazy Mountains.
They chose this particular spot because it could easily be irrigated from Billy Creek, Otter Creek, Dry Creek, and the Sweet Grass River. Also there were very few settlers in the area, and this gave them a wide choice of land. Half-breed Indians and cattle kings were the mainstay of the population. Lacking in opposition, they moved in to settle. Due to the lack of gold camps and thus budding towns, this section of the country was to remain relatively useless to urbanites. Right up to the present day it has never teemed with people.

5. Perhaps this has something to do with why they were so easily accepted.
CHAPTER II

Life in the Settlement

The squatters that lived in the area when the Norwegians arrived gave them basic ideas for housing. The squatters used lime and sand mortar or the readily available clay to make an earth paste to plaster between the broad-axed walls. These they then covered with cloth or paper. The settlers moved in with a friendly neighbor while their house was being built, or lived in their wagons, as both Mrs. Ellingson and Mrs. Clara Liebel told me. It was only in the later days of the settlement that the new-comers moved in with the neighbors. These buildings were of sturdy construction, especially conditioned for the weather by wooden pegs and notched logs which would stand a greater strain than nails. They also often used the mortar which has been previously described.

The houses generally consisted of one or two rooms. Only occasionally did they extend to a much larger size due to heating problems. The lack of room necessitated children doubling up in their sleeping quarters, which while it did

6. This cloth covering is still visible in Castle, Montana.

7. Standing testimony to this type of construction is the barn on our ranch; it is now over eighty years old.
save room also served to help keep the children warm. What little furniture they had was very crude, and there were few conveniences. One so-called convenience was the cellar under the house. Used to store vegetables and canned goods, this also served to help keep the houses warm. Contrary to popular belief, there people had glass in their windows by 1883, not waxed or greased paper. The latter were used only as a temporary pane until broken glass could be replaced. Heat was supplied by fireplaces and, in the case of a few fortunates, by wood stoves brought from Minnesota. Water came from wells or springs and more often than not it had to be carried a considerable distance. The "spring-houses" not only protected the spring from contamination, but served as a means of refrigeration during the summer for milk, cream, and butter.

The women furnished illumination by making candles rendered from sheep or beef tallow. They also made the vast majority of their clothes, although for very special occasions such as weddings they might be store-purchased clothes. Usually, however, the sheep were sheared and the wool was carded, spun, and sewed in the home.

The diet was the famed "meat and potatoes" with venison the abundant source of supply. Vegetables from home gar-

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dens might round this out along with wild berries of all varieties, when they were in season. Winter storage was not equipped to care for these more perishable foodstuffs. It consisted mainly of crocks of meat in a brine solution or lines of jerky and dried beef. Other unperishable foodstuffs were also stored here as trips to town were infrequent after the first snow. The settlers usually stocked up in the fall for the winter so that only an emergency would make a trip to town absolutely necessary. Although Melville was in existence at the time, the settlers traded in Bozeman. Dorsey, later to become Big Timber, had not yet been founded and neither had Livingston, so Bozeman—eighty-five miles and a week's trip by wagon—was their trading center. Mrs. Rostad remembers that the family made semi-annual trips to Bozeman to buy or trade for groceries and other supplies. After one year on the ranch her father and brothers had saved enough hides to trade for a year's supply of flour. It was not unusual to buy a thousand pounds of flour which was traded for hides or wheat. The settlers raised their own meat as the buffalo were sacrificed earlier to the buffalo hunters. This made their livestock all-important. The stock received more care than anything else. Even the construction of the barn was done more carefully than that of the house.

9. This occurred for reasons I was able only to attribute to the fact that Melville was so small.
The acquisition of land was also important to the settlers. Every other section in each township was owned by the government but the others, which were owned by the Northern Pacific Railroad, were for sale. They sold at the then-high rate of one dollar per acre. Men could build up big property holdings in this way because they could rent the government sections. With all this land available they turned to ranching rather than farming. Perhaps this was a fortunate move on their part as the land was, and is, more suited to ranching than to farming. This was not without its problems, rustlers. This was not due to any dislike for the Norwegians, but rustling was an occupation for some. Shortly after the rustling started, barbed wire was introduced, presumably as a means of thwarting further attempts by the rustlers.

These settlers had discovered the possibility of running both beef and sheep by a rotation system, thus they never had any real range wars. There were even a sufficient number of "woolies" in the country to warrant the building of a shearing plant on Seven-mile Creek. In connection with this plant Reider Anderson told me a story illustrating these people's love of an open country as well as their complete independence. It seems that Martin Forsythe and another man,

10. Interview with Mr. Reider Anderson, August 18, 1962.
who cannot be identified, were taking their sheep to Seven-mi
Creek. The latter man, who was camped on Wheeler Creek, as
asked Martin Forsythe, camped seven miles away on Ten-mile
Creek, "Vy you camp on top of me?"

A prominent problem for these people and one which
remains today is that of prior appropriations concerning
water rights. The laws give the most water to those settling
highest on the creek only if they are the first to settle there.
It is possible that someone at the mouth of the creek may have
water rights to the entire creek so that in a drought period
no one above him may take any water out of the creek. This
often resulted in bankruptcy and the desertion of many of
the ranches by later settlers. Perhaps the greatest remain-
ing testimony to this problem is the Stocker Ditch. It runs
from high in Big Timber Canyon to the Sweet Grass by Melville;
a distance of ten miles as the crow flies and perhaps of
twenty by the winding path of the ditch. It was built entire-
ly by men using horses and wagons; a machine never touched it.
This ditch is a major source of irrigation water even today.

These settlers were fortunate in their lack of In-
dian problems. The only neighboring Indians were long-time
allies of the whites, the Crows. They mixed so well that
intermarriage, while not common, was not frowned upon by the
community. This intermarriage ceased, however, when the
Crows were moved to the site of their present reservation east
of Billings, Montana, in 1887.

They had other excitement to make up for the lack of the traditional fear of Indian attack. There were a number of wild cattle in the area. Naturally nervous, the cattle were given to stampeding for no apparent reason so the settlers were constantly on the alert for a "run". Occasionally, however, they were caught unprepared as was Mrs. P. O. Fallang one fall day. She was walking along Otter Creek gathering choke cherries and berries. Suddenly a herd topped the little hillock just above her. With nowhere but the creek to hide, she jumped under a slight overhang on the creek bank as the cattle galloped over her sanctuary. This same woman seemed to get more than her fair share of excitement as it was she who found the hobbled horses above her house. Upon closer examination she found the outfit of a trapper and the skeleton of a man who had evidently died the previous winter. The cause of death was never absolutely determined, although many stories and as many possible causes for his death still circulate. Indians remain the most logical explanation.

Roads for these settlers consisted mainly of just "heading 'cross country", but a few roads were in existence.

11. Interview with Mrs. Reid Anderson, August 18, 1962.
12. Interview with Mr. Paul Van Cleve III, August 10, 1962.
Rough and impassable much of the time, they were also unnecessarily long as they followed the section lines running a mile straight in one direction then making a ninety degree turn and going for another mile. Thus they continued, leaving a jagged pattern until their destination was reached. Late in the 1880's the main roads were improved somewhat by the establishment of a stage route which ran from Big Timber to Melville. Even with these "improved" roads, it was very seldom that anyone of the children got to go to town. As Reider Anderson told me, he was nine before he went to Big Timber and several years older before he traveled farther. The children were never lonely as all the families were large, often numbering ten to fourteen children. The Olsons, a family of relative new-comers to the settlement, had fourteen children. Their place naturally became a visiting spot for the younger generation. The children had their share of work, each being given his own chores to do so the visiting was done only in free time and if the children felt lonely enough to walk the required distance.

The only time favorable for adult visiting of this type was during the Christmas holidays. For two or three weeks the settlers disregarded everything except the most essential chores and visited everyone else in the Settlement. Parties began shortly before Christmas and lasted well into January with dancing, card games, sledding and skating.
as the main amusements. For these gala affairs they thought nothing of riding fifteen or twenty miles. The fruits of the holiday cooking marathon were all consumed by the time everyone had visited, usually pot-luck style. The only other social get-togethers, outside weddings and other church festivities, were in connection with the farming. Harvesting bees was the common fall occupation of the men. In the community there was only one threshing machine. So in order to get his grain harvested, each man helped harvest every other man's crop. This custom has survived the easy time payment plan as there is still only one thresher in the community. Even the horses from a fast diminishing supply of draft animals are used. While the men were harvesting, the women gathered to cook for them and, in their spare time, to quilt. Occasionally, however, a welcome new activity would become another time to socialize. Such was the Thanksgiving turkey shoot at Melville, a nearby town. Although fairly close—three miles—from the heart of the Settlement, the settlers only did slight local trading here, preferring the long trip to Bozeman. At Hickok's store, however, they did buy what little machinery they used as it was too cumbersome to haul.

Since these people had all the social life they could

13. Interview with Mr. Reider Anderson, August 18, 1962.
handle right in the Settlement, they rarely went outside it for amusement. If they did want to socialize with the surrounding people who were not part of the community, they were perfectly welcome for they were accepted and well-liked by their non-Norwegian neighbors for their quiet, industrious ways.
CHAPTER III

The School

Soon after they arrived and built their houses, the settlers began to erect a school. When Reider Anderson started school in 1897, there was a frame school house on what is now the Torvald Anderson corner on Billy Creek. Mrs. Webster was the teacher at the time.

The first school was a log cabin which was moved between 1885-1892 to what is now the Hart "Dot S Dot" Ranch. This building was replaced by a frame structure. The third structure was erected on the site of the frame house but was of stucco and was somewhat larger, having two cloak rooms, a coal shed, and a library-teacherage, besides the main room. In 1920 it was moved to its present site on Dry Creek, and in this 1962-1963 school year is empty for the first time in over thirty years.

The school terms, although short ones, ran all year long. During the summer the youngsters attended school, while during the winter the older children did, as there was more work they could do at home during the summer. Some people

15. Interview with Mrs. Reider Anderson, August 30, 1962.
16. Interview with Mr. Reider Anderson, August 20, 1962.
opposed this idea and were stubborn enough and jealous enough of their freedom to do just the opposite. Such a man was Henry Ellingson who would be "switched" [sic] if any woman could tell him when to send his children to school.

The criteria for finishing school, since no one really knew where they were in a grade equivalent, was whenever the seats got too small or the students married. Until that time, however, the students with a horse rode to school while the less fortunate ones walked, regardless of the weather.

The children were probably quite slow to learn the English being taught them in two of the "three R's" as they spoke only Norwegian at home. The older generation attempted to remedy this by attending school whenever possible to learn to read and write English. The women seem to have accomplished more in this respect, possibly because their time was not taken up with outside chores and their household tasks were considerably lightened by the work of the youngsters.

The teachers themselves "boarded round", staying a month with each family until they made the rounds and then they would begin the cycle all over again. The teacher would either pay directly or, more often, the payment was

17. Interview with Mr. Reider Anderson, August 30, 1962.
withheld from her salary. Later, however, the teacher always paid directly for she started living with just one family. This put them in financial straits for the majority of the teachers were poorly paid, eighth grade graduates. Later they were required to have a high school diploma, but wages still remained low. The absence of normal schools and therefore higher training later brought another difficulty. With the passage of time, many teachers were required to return to summer school year after year to supplement their lack of a degree.

Occasionally, a teacher would come from the East. Such a man was Ben Mjelde who arrived in 1886. He stayed with Ben Forsythe rather than with Grandfather Mjelde, who kept a boot shop in Melville, as the distance was such that it was unhandy to travel both ways each day. It was Grandfather Mjelde who ran from the school on Billy Creek to Melville in order to escape punishment from the teacher. This family seems to have abounded with teachers, for it was not too much later that Fred J. Mjelde arrived to teach. He had been sent West from Iowa for his health and, lacking the physical stamina to do anything very strenuous, he took over his brother Ben's position as a school teacher. His health improved in the dry climate and he later married Joan Hunter whose mother was the country superintendent, Mrs. J. Solberg.

Their daughter, Eva, now Eva Roquet, taught the children of her father's pupil's, the Greens and the Forsythes, while she boarded with the Greens. Later she married the Big Timber veterinarian and now lives there, running the Boulder Cafe.

School was not always as it might seem for the teacher. As the boys got fairly old before they left school, they were capable of being very difficult for the teacher to handle. A story is told of one year when they were on such an unruly streak that no teacher would stay. A young Eastern gentleman, a total dude, was finally hired. The boys planned to have some fun with him, but their plans were shortly destroyed. The young man, who looked so timid, walked into the classroom and told the boys how tough he had heard they were, but that he was sure they would get along with him as he was also fairly tough. Amid the snickers and sly looks that followed this speech, he calmly laid a Colt revolver on the desk.

CHAPTER IV

The Church

Shortly after the settlers reached their destination and had become fairly well organized, the Home Mission Board of the Norwegian Augustan Synod sent the Reverend Peder I. Reinertsen to the group. He arrived in the summer of 1885. It was no easy task for this newly graduated seminarian, but he succeeded in establishing the first Norwegian Lutheran Church in Montana. Strangely enough, this young minister was the uncle of Mrs. Ocee Johnson, the wife of the present Lutheran minister.

On October 26, 1885, after everyone had a chance to become acquainted with the minister, an organizational meeting was held at the Ellingson place for the Evangelical Lutheran Congregation. P. O. Fallang was elected chairman and B. O. Forsythe was elected secretary. J. M. Dahl was elected deacon for one year and P. O. Fallang was placed in the office of deacon for a two year term. B. O. Forsythe was to be a trustee for one year and Henry Ellingson


22. Ibid.
was elected to serve as the secretary for a year.

A constitution was also drawn up and ratified. The signatories were: Ole Crest, P. O. Fallang, Peter Rye, B. O. Forsythe, Ole Erickson, Syvert Crest, Benjamen Hoyseth, Andrew Johnson, Eric Neste, Henry Ellingson, P. H. Peterson, and John Hoff. The other original members of this congregation who were absent were J. M. Dahl, John Rye, and Knute Anderson.

This small organization became the hub of Lutheran activity in Montana from Forsythe to Missoula, thus encompassing the greater part of the state. It was only proper that this hub of activity should hold the first Lutheran services in the state—a tribute to the community. They were held in the school house as no church had been built as of then. Services were continued to November 29, 1914, when the church was finished. Until that time services were held in the school house or in private homes. The minister at this momentous occasion was the Reverend Engelstad. After the necessary land had been donated by Knute Anderson, a sum of $2,600 was needed. This amount had been accumulated over the years so that only a very small amount had to be raised immediately. The church was erected where it now stands.

23. Interview with Mr. Reider Anderson, August 18, 1962.
stands about a mile below the Torvald Anderson corner.

In 1895, a parsonage was built under the auspices of the Reverend J. E. Madson. The cost—$600—was only for materials, as the congregation had a "parsonage bee". The men built the house and the women decorated and furnished it. In 1903 it was moved to a forty acre plot where the church now stands. Earl Green moved it.

The melancholy partner to the church was established in 1885 when a plot of land was fenced on Billy Creek for the cemetery. Being methodical people, the Norwegians even organized a cemetery committee. Appointed to it were Peter Rye, Ole Crest, and Ole Erickson. The lands was donated by Jack and Harry Hart, neighboring ranchers from England. The cemetery was dedicated by the Reverend Reinertsen.

The first funeral was in January of 1886 when the Fallang's six month old daughter died. At that time, there was a very cold spell with fairly deep snow so the baby was placed in her casket on a sled and thus was transported to the cemetery. The Reverend Paulson officiated with very few mourners in attendance. The baby's mother could not even be present as she had to remain home to take care of her other youngsters.

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25. Eric Neste was the official cabinet maker.
As far as the matter of organization was concerned, the ladies had absolutely no intention of being excluded. So on May 17, 1890, seven women organized the Melville Ladies' Aid. The charter members were Olga Fallang, president; Mrs. Sivert Crest, secretary-treasurer; Mrs. P. O. Fallang, Mrs. Sam Berg, Mrs. H. Sandsness, Mrs. J. Dahl, and Mrs. John Rye. They held their meetings once or twice a month to decide on their forthcoming projects. The meetings always ended in a community pot-luck dinner after which the ladies returned home to quilt, knit socks and mittens, or make pin cushions and neckties, depending on the nature of their project for the period. If there was not a dinner, the members and their families adjourned to the neighboring Green ranch where a party was, or soon would be, in session. These church activities soon became the social focal point in the community.

The religious education of the children was not a bit more neglected than their formal schooling. Sunday school was held from the very beginning of the church. The volunteer instructor was usually the current school teacher. Besides the Sunday School, their summer Bible school, or Bible Camp as it is now called, was also active. A. Tollefson, whose relative was later the pastor at Big Timber, was the first instructor. With their instructor, the chil-

dren spent several weeks each summer at the Billy Creek school house. A Girls' Aid was also started, but it did not last over five years, from 1903 to 1908, for the girls found most of their time was taken up with Ladies' Aid, in which they were also active.

In 1907, the Big Timber Lutheran church was built, and the pastor moved his parsonage to Big Timber, but he continues to serve the Melville church. Every other Sunday the Melville congregation holds the early service. On the alternate Sundays, Melville has the late services. This is not true only in the winter when roads are bad; then Melville has services only on alternate Sundays.

Perhaps the saddest event in the history of the church occurred in 1935, when the services in Norwegian were discontinued. It showed the beginnings of the diffusion of a closely knit, heritage-proud people.

The church has remained the bulwark of the Settlement, however. In 1962 there were one hundred thirteen souls in the congregation constituting thirty-one family units, most of whom were related to the original settlers. It is the church which seems to have kept this group as closely knit as it has remained, although family ties are very strong also.
CHAPTER V

The Anderson Family

Perhaps the best example of the unity of the Settlement could be given by telling a brief history of the Anderson family. This is a family in the Settlement today that was there at the earliest settling and, through intermarriage and moving, is the nucleus of the Settlement today.

Knute Anderson arrived here in 1884 after having a son, Thomas, born at a ranch near present-day Big Timber on the trip out. He later had another son whom he named Reider. This is the Reider Anderson that I interviewed for this paper.

These two boys attended school in the various Settlement school houses, helped to build the church and to develop the community. Reider married Signe Peterson, but they had no children. Signe was a school teacher, however, and was practically a permanent fixture in the Settlement School. She taught my father, myself, and my younger sister, among the children of the neighborhood. All of them were, by my time, still not only Norwegian, but related to "Aunty" as Signe is fondly known.

27. This name in itself should be indicative of the close ties that have remained. For two years of the many years that "Aunty" taught me, everyone was related. I was related by intermarriage.
Knute's other son, Thomas, also married. He and his wife, Elizabeth Krone, had four sons and two daughters. They all remained on the ranch on Dry Creek until the girls married. These children were still so strongly Norwegian that they could speak only a few words of English when they attended grade school with my father. Two of the children, the daughters, remained fairly close to home even after they married. Ruth moved up Sweet Grass Canyon as Mrs. Lloyd Rein and Mabel moved to a ranch south of Big Timber as Mrs. Art Grosfield.

They boys grew up and began to take over the running of the ranch for their father. Kermit married Lucille Haugstad and they, with Kermit's brother Carl, took over the ranch completely for their father when he became county commissioner, a position he still holds. Leif moved three miles when he married Gilma Grosfield. They settled south of the home place on Otter Creek. Thorvald, my uncle, moved up on the old Noyes' place when he married Charlotte Van Cleve, my father's sister. They were then four miles west of the original Anderson ranch.

All of the children have a family gathering twice a year, usually at Christmas and the Fourth of July. Other than absences due to trips, this has been broken only by the death of Mrs. Thomas Anderson ("Nanna") a year ago.

The great grandchildren, my generation, are the first
to break any of the traditions. It has been with their generation that services in Norwegian were stopped at the church at Melville. The children sometimes also miss the reunions now as they are in the service or at St. Olaf's and Concordia for college. The boys have, in the majority, either remained at home or gone to the service and college, returning home then to ranch in the Settlement. As of yet, none of the girls have married, nor the men, but they are beginning to leave the Settlement to teach.

With each succeeding generation a few more customs will be lost until the heritage and glory that is theirs will be legend.
CHAPTER IV

Summary

These, then, are outstanding examples of why this "Settlement" is important to history. In all the records of immigration and immigrants to this country, the usual outcome and the result for which they were continually striving was to attain "Americanization"—to be swallowed by the American life and to completely lose any national characteristics which could identify them.

Not so this particular group of Norwegians. They left Norway freely and moved across the United States for political reasons. But not until they found calm in a setting much like "the old country" did they stay.

Even their choice of land is significant. They found a setting much like Norway so they could at least have familiar surroundings.

They maintained their language through the third generation. This feat was accomplished not only because of a strong nationalistic spirit, but also in their schools. They had only Norwegian teachers and spoke only Norwegian in the home. Naturally the children spoke Norwegian rather than English. English was to them as a foreign language is to us—something we can use if we must, but we are "at home" in the
English language, hence we use it whenever possible. This was true of the settlers as far as the Norwegian language was concerned. They could speak English but saved it for the necessary occasions when they actually had to speak it. They were not then loathe to use it, however, for regardless of how well they retained their nationalistic identity through use of their native tongue at home, they recognized the need for learning to speak English. They accomplished the task of learning this new language so well they became strong, upstanding members of the community.

They aided the growth and settling of Montana, especially in the religious or missionary aspect. As these settlers brought the first Lutheran congregation and church to Montana, they were instrumental in organizing the other parishes and congregations in the state, at least from Missoula to Three Forks. They were, then, missionaries in their own right. It is not at all unlikely that they tried to preach to the friendly Crows whenever they could.

As they became more settled, the Norwegians seemed to take a greater and more dominant interest in the community. They ran for, and were elected to, offices in the county government. One such person was Tom Anderson, who served as county commissioner for a generation.

Industrious and hardworking, rather slow to anger, these people became well-liked, prominent citizens. They
attracted more Scandinavians to the surrounding countryside until, at the present time, Sweet Grass County is a Scandinavian county, with the exception of a small Dutch settlement called Wormser which is located halfway between Big Timber and Melville.

Through school and church, as well as home life, the Norwegians retained their language and culture through three generations. It is only with the last generation that the unity is being cracked. The relentless march of progress has forced the fourth generation to leave the close confines of the Settlement to attain an education. Once this breakup begins in earnest, especially if the boys no longer return to make a living at ranching, the customs and language will be forgotten. The Settlement as such will dwindle with the death of each older member until there will be no survivor. And caught up in the rush and bustle of progress in the "Space Age" and the ever more powerful status symbol, the fourth generation will lose their heritage in the smoke and roar of engines or they will consciously bury it in order to attain identity with the masses and therefore, in some obscure way, social prestige.

Yet while their pronounced clannish attitude remains, at least a vestige of unity will be retained. This clannish attitude is evident today--no one in the Settlement will give a direct answer without first consulting the rest of the "clan"
to discover their various points of view. Intermarriage is most probably the foundation for this clannish feeling. The entire Settlement is now related, either as first or second cousins. As ties of blood are supposed to be stronger than any other tie, perhaps the unity will remain at its present level for at least another generation. Certainly this aspect of intermarriage in the Settlement contributed a great deal to the fact that the Norwegians remained as united and closely knit as they did.

Whatever becomes of the "Settlement" now, it has served its purpose in the settling and the development of the frontier. While retaining its identity, it has proved to be an integral part of American life through its contributions not only of farm produce, but in industrious workers, the foundation of a religion in Montana, and the stalwart, freedom-loving members of a community system of government. This is its place in the Western American frontier.
APPENDIX II

Bibliography

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