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HISTORY OF THE SCANDINAVIAN SETTLEMENT
IN LINCOLN COUNTY, KANSAS

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A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Division in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Science

Thesis Advisor Crest Mahan

Chairman of Thesis Committee Crest Mahan

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KANSAS STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

Pittsburg, Kansas

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ABSTRACT

This study is a history of the establishment and development of the Scandinavian settlement in Lincoln County, Kansas. This settlement is one of many such groups in Kansas, but no history of this group has been written.

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The State Census records and the Patent Records for homestead claims were important sources of primary material. Since more than ninety per cent of the settlers homesteaded

ABSTRACT

This study is a history of the establishment and development of the Scandinavian settlement in Lincoln County, Kansas. This settlement is one of many such groups in Kansas, but no history of this group has been written.

The causes for the migration to America, the reasons for the selection of Kansas, and the social, cultural, economic, and religious development of the group are interesting and have been emphasized in this study.

While all the Scandinavian nationalities are represented in the settlement, particular attention is given to the Danish group, as their settlement was dominated to some extent by the religious motive, which has influenced social and cultural development of the community.

The period of the greatest growth and development was during the first three decades of the settlement's history. For this reason emphasis has been placed on this period in this thesis. The history of this period is interesting because it was the pioneer period of the settlement, and the story of the settlers' struggle with frontier conditions is an inspiring one. The recent history of the group is typical of that of any agricultural community in Kansas.

The State Census records and the Patent Records for homestead claims were important sources of primary material. Since more than ninety per cent of the settlers homesteaded

land, the patent records of land claims furnished important information regarding names of settlers, dates of the filing of claims, and the location of claims. As the county archives were destroyed when the courthouse burned in 1898, school statistics and deed records which would have furnished valuable material were not available.

Other sources of primary material were interviews with and letters from the original settlers or the children of the founders. Contemporary newspapers furnished valuable material on the educational and social development of the settlement.

The county has an area of 720 square miles and is composed of twenty townships.¹ The Scandinavians reside in Orange, Marion, Vesper, Indiana, Battle Creek and Grant townships. The Scandinavian settlement in Grant township has been the incentive for this study.

The county is traversed by the Saline river, which flows in a southeasterly direction. Its chief tributaries are Wolf, Spillman, Elkhorn and Prosser Creeks. The Spillman Valley is the site of the chief Scandinavian settlement in the county. As it was a wooded valley, it had a special attraction for the immigrants. Enough wood was found to justify the erection of a steam saw mill in Grant township.²

¹Charles R. Tuttle, Centennial History of the State of Kansas, 1876 (Lawrence, Kansas, 1876), p. 325.

²Ibid.

INTRODUCTION

Lincoln County--named for Abraham Lincoln--is located near the center of the state in the third tier of counties from the Nebraska line. There are six counties between it and the western boundary of Kansas and seven counties between the eastern boundary of Lincoln and the eastern boundary of Kansas. It is bounded on the north by Mitchell County; on the east by Ottawa and Saline Counties; Ellsworth County lies to the south; and Russell and Osborne Counties bound it on the west.

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¹Charles R. Tuttle, Centennial History of the State of Kansas, 1876 (Lawrence, Kansas, 1876), p. 625.

²Ibid.

A flour mill was erected on the Saline river, which proved to be a valuable asset to the pioneers. Magnesian limestone, sandstone, mineral paint and potter's clay are found in the bluffs along the streams.³ A fair quality of coal, which the early settlers found to be of much value was found in some sections of the county. The chief resource, however, is the rolling prairie land which was especially desirable for agriculture.

It is believed that the French under de Bourmont, who passed through the region in 1724, were the first white men to visit the county.⁴ Pike's expedition crossed the southwestern corner of the county in 1806. Hunting parties often visited the region during the sixties, but it is believed no permanent settlers came until 1865.⁵

During the sixties the Arapaho and Cheyenne Indian bands roved through the Saline and Solomon Valleys, where they committed many depredations against the settlers.⁶ As a result a detachment of the Seventh United States Cavalry under Colonel Benteen was stationed on the Schermerhorn

³Frank T. Blackmar, editor, Kansas, a Cyclopedia of State History Embracing Events, Institutions, Industries, Counties, Cities, Towns, Prominent Persons, etc. (2 vols. with supplementary volume, Chicago, 1912), II, 164. Another

⁴Ibid., p. 162.

⁵Ibid., op. cit., II, 163.

⁶Christian Bernhardt, Indian Raids in Lincoln County, 1864-1869 (Lincoln, Kansas, 1910), p. 25.

Blackmar, op. cit., p. 163.

ranch in the southern part of the county for several months in 1868.⁷

The legislature passed a measure creating a county unit in 1867, but it was unorganized territory until 1870.⁸ The unit was attached to Ottawa County for revenue and judicial purposes and was called Lincoln township.

The county government was perfected in 1870 at which time the county commissioners divided the region into four townships. In 1871 the county officers met on the open prairie and decided on a location three miles east of the present city of Lincoln for the county seat and called it Abram. Citizens in Lincoln Center opposed this and petitioned for an election to determine the county seat site. At the election held February 19, 1877, Lincoln received 232 votes and Abram 176. On April 1, 1873, bonds in the amount of \$4,000 were voted for the construction of a court house, which burned in 1898; the present building was erected in 1900. The loss included practically all the records of the county to that date.⁹

A branch of the Union Pacific Railroad crosses the county in a nearly due east and west direction. It offers an outlet to the main line of the road at Solomon. Another

⁷Blackmar, op. cit., II, 163.

⁸Daniel Webster Wilder, Annals of Kansas 1541-1885 (Topeka, 1886), p. 454.

⁹Blackmar, op. cit., p. 163.

branch line, the Salina Northern, offers access to Salina.

Until the recent era of improved roads, the county has been seriously handicapped by this lack of transportation facilities.

Population growth was rapid during the first decade of settlement, because only a small portion of the county was railroad land, thus giving the homesteader an opportunity to acquire free land.¹⁰

Lincoln County is an agricultural region, with wheat being the main crop. Sorghums are raised for feed as cattle raising is the second important industry. There were many orchards in the county before the recent drought years.

that prevailed during that period account for a large part of the Scandinavian immigration to the United States, for a series of droughts during those years drove thousands of them to the United States.² The crop failures of the drought years caused a severe famine in the "north countries." Many of the older Scandinavian citizens in Kansas have vivid memories of the great famine of 1867 and 1868 in the old country. It was so severe that the agrarian population was impoverished and the urban population was left jobless; both faced starvation and want. They sought relief in America, "the land of plenty."

The agrarian distress was aggravated by the economic

¹⁰E. N. Barr, Souvenir History of Lincoln County (Topeka, Kansas, 1908), p. 51. Background of Swedish Immigration, (Chicago, 1931), p. 222.

CHAPTER I

CAUSES OF IMMIGRATION

The Scandinavians have long been noted for their maritime accomplishments, but the prevailing belief that the seas provide their only source of livelihood is an erroneous one, for many of the Scandinavians are lovers of the land and have made their hilly, niggardly soil produce under normal conditions, a satisfactory, if not an abundant living.

Agricultural conditions are not always normal in the Scandinavian countries, a fact the Scandinavians learned to their sorrow during the years 1865 to 1868. The conditions that prevailed during that period account for a large part of the Scandinavian immigration to the United States, for a series of droughts during those years drove thousands of them to the United States.¹ The crop failures of the drought years caused a severe famine in the "north countries." Many of the older Scandinavian citizens in Kansas have vivid memories of the great famine of 1867 and 1868 in the old country. It was so severe that the agrarian population was impoverished and the urban population was left jobless; both faced starvation and want. They sought relief in America, "the land of plenty."

The agrarian distress was aggravated by the economic

¹ Florence Edith Janson, The Background of Swedish Immigration, (Chicago, 1931), p. 222.

crisis which gripped northern Europe in the sixties.² Over speculation in farm lands for several years previous to this time finally resulted in a period of low prices which destroyed the real estate market and caused a general business upset. The unsettled condition of all Europe, as a result of the wars of 1864 and 1866, also disturbed business conditions.³ The defeat of Denmark by Germany and Sweden's failure to come to her neighbor's aid had reduced the political prestige of the northern countries throughout Europe, and seriously affected the financial conditions of the Scandinavian nations. These adverse conditions reached a climax the year following the restoration of peace in the United States. The result was a general migration from Scandinavia to the new world that reached such proportions that the Scandinavian governments were alarmed.

A severe crop failure in Norway caused thousands of Norwegians to seek new opportunities in America. Norway lost a larger percentage of her population than any other Scandinavian nation except Iceland.⁴ Almost a third of Denmark's colonists migrated to the United States. Many Danes from the provinces that Denmark lost to Germany left because they did not care for German military service or because they

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 223.

⁴Charles and Mary Beard, The Rise of American Civilization, (2 vols., New York, 1930), II, 141.

disliked German rule. Financial conditions in Denmark had been seriously affected by the war, and this combined with political dissatisfaction over governmental policies during the war caused many Danes to join the swelling tide of emigration. Sweden also contributed its quota. The Swedish migrations began in the middle sixties and continued unabated for more than a decade.⁵ Every county in Sweden was represented in this tide. During the period 1861 to 1865, 10,429 Swedes entered the United States. This number was increased to 80,491 in the years 1866 to 1870.⁶ The conditions underlying this wholesale exodus were about the same as those affecting Denmark and Norway. An American historian wrote that "Before half a century had passed the Scandinavians in the United States were equal in number to one-fourth of the combined population of Denmark, Norway and Sweden."⁷

Another very subtle and effective cause of migration was the advertising carried on by steamship and emigrant companies. Nearly all the large steamship lines advertised freely in the Scandinavian countries. The Hamburg, Cunard, Inman, Allan and National steamship companies all competed for the emigrant trade. The Hamburg line was the first to advertise in Swedish newspapers. The Cunard line soon followed suit.⁸ Reduced

⁵C. Terrence Philblad, "The Kansas Swedes," The Southwestern Science Quarterly, XII, (June, 1932), 35.

⁶Janson, op. cit., p. 227.

⁷Beard, op. cit.

⁸Janson, op. cit., p. 241.

rates were offered and all the companies promised that the immigrants would be accompanied by interpreters. The European-American Land Company began to advertise in Sweden as early as 1869. It was a large corporation with headquarters in New York. The American Emigrant Company had offices in New York and Copenhagen. Its chief rival was the Columbia Emigration Company which tried to undersell the American by cutting the cost of passage from the regular price of \$40 to \$37.⁹ The Scandinavian Emigrant Company offered the emigrant the added inducement of helping him locate his homestead. The Swedish American Emigrant Company, not to be outdone, offered to help the immigrant obtain work and promised to provide free transportation from New York to the place where work was found.¹⁰ These measures brought results, for most of the Scandinavian settlements in the Middle West were founded through the efforts of land and emigrant companies. Other incentives for migration were of a more personal nature. Hundreds were influenced by letters from friends and relatives who had established themselves in their new homes. Many of these missives were exaggerations, or failed to paint a true picture of new world conditions. Often these letters contained prepaid tickets to the United States. Many who had no economic reasons for leaving their homes, were induced by

⁹ Ibid., p. 235.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 242. *action*, p. xix.

these glowing accounts of the new world to join their friends for social reasons, as America offered the same social status and opportunities to all regardless of occupation or birth.¹¹

Some came for psychological reasons: the individual who could not adapt himself to his environment; the one who was not understood by his family; and the individual who thought he was mistreated. All of them came because they believed the new world would provide the panacea for their ills. The man who had lost his standing in the community because of some petty misdemeanor; and the woman who had lost her reputation turned to America for a solution of their problems. The ambitious boys and girls of the laboring class came to America because this country would afford them better social opportunities. Many sons came because they did not wish to follow their fathers' trades or had disagreed with their parents on some subject concerning their futures. Daughters who did not wish to marry the men selected by their parents, or who wished to avert domestic service sought escape from these fates by flight to the new world.¹²

It is very evident that the heavy Scandinavian immigration of the seventies and eighties was no mere accident, nor was it the result of any one factor; but was caused by a combination of economic, personal, psychological, and social influences.

¹¹Ibid., p. 230.

¹²Ibid., Introduction, p. xix.

Nor was the selection of Kansas by many of them as their future home an accidental choice. Advertising of the state by railroad companies, land companies, newspapers, and magazines was largely responsible for the interest shown by the Scandinavian land companies in the opportunities that Kansas offered. The First Swedish Agricultural Company was organized in Chicago in April, 1868. In the fall of that year the Galesburg Colonization Company, which was largely responsible for the Scandinavian settlement of Kansas, was organized.¹³ The Chicago Company sent a colony of Scandinavians to the Spillman Creek region of what was later organized as Lincoln County, in 1869. The Galesburg Company, which was founded by the Reverend A. W. Dahlstrom, pastor of the Lutheran Church of Galesburg, sent members of its faith to the Lincoln County and other settlements in Central Kansas.¹⁴

These companies were induced to send their members to Kansas by land agents and other agencies, who were interested in the developing of the state for various reasons. The state's opportunities were oftentimes exaggerated by the enthusiastic boosters of the region. The following article appeared in a pamphlet of that day:

¹³Carrol D. Clark and Roy L. Roberts, People of Kansas (Topeka, 1936), p. 53.

¹⁴Nell Blythe Waldron, Colonization in Kansas From 1860 to 1890 (Unpublished Doctor's Dissertation, Northwestern University, Evanston, 1931), p. 31.

The climate and health of Kansas are unequalled. These indeed are among its chief excellencies and recommendations for settlement. The atmosphere is dry and pure, and singularly beneficial to persons suffering from or predisposed to pulmonary disease.¹⁵

Another writer, James H. Lathrop, boasted in 1871 that:

The State of Kansas contains fifty million acres of land. In 1860 it had 107,206 inhabitants, and in 1870 had 363,000 and over, the increase being 225%, and more than any other state in the Union.¹⁶

An advertisement in the Kansas Herald and Home Missionary Enterprise in 1871 invited everyone to sell out and come to Kansas and "make a home for yourself and needy friends."¹⁷ To emphasize the opportunities it promised a subsistence for millions.¹⁸

Another agency which gave the state much publicity was the Kansas Pacific Railroad. Its lines reached Junction City in 1866, just two years before the Illinois Emigrant companies were organized. The company had been granted every alternate section of land in a strip extending ten miles back on either side of the road bed, the total grant amounting to six million acres.¹⁸ The railroad was anxious to sell this land to settlers, so was willing to give the Chicago land

¹⁵Facts and Figures About Kansas; An Emigrants' And Settlers' Guide (Lawrence, 1870), p. 18.

¹⁶James H. Lathrop, "Kansas," Kansas Home And Herald Missionary Enterprise, I (April-May, 1871), 2.

¹⁷Ibid., Advertisement, p. 2.

¹⁸Bliss Isely and W. M. Richards, Four Centuries in Kansas (Wichita, 1936), p. 205.

companies free passes to give to all emigrants sent out by them, who would purchase railroad land. Most of the Scandinavians filed on homestead lands, but the railroad was glad to welcome them as it was anxious to have the state settled, even though the first settlers were homesteaders. The railroad brought most of the settlers and their supplies to the region and so profited by their coming even though they did not purchase railroad land. The land which the government had so generously granted the railroad was advertised for sale at two to six dollars per acre with one-fourth off for cash or on six to eleven years credit with interest at seven per cent.¹⁹

By the Treaty of Medicine Lodge in 1867, the government secured possession of the Arapaho and Cheyenne lands in northern Kansas, the Indians having agreed to settle south of the Arkansas river. This removed another barrier to settlement and helped to account for the flow of settlers to Kansas immediately after the treaty was enforced. Since the Indians were still in possession of much of the territory south and west of Kansas, the settlers naturally came to Kansas as they believed there was less danger of encountering unfriendly Indians.²⁰

¹⁹Personal letter from Isaac S. Woodard to the author.
New West Monthly, advertisement, I (December, 1878), 82.

²⁰Mervin H. Garfield, "Defense of the Kansas Frontier," Kansas Historical Quarterly, I (1931-1932), 469.

The Scandinavians selected the Spillman Creek region in central Kansas because they wanted land they could cultivate without having to clear it of tree growth; and because they wanted running water and some timber for firewood. The Spillman Valley seemed to meet these requirements, and it was far enough west to enable them to obtain sufficient homestead land to satisfy the requirements of the entire group. They may have discovered it by chance, or it may have been discovered by land scouts sent out by one of the land companies.²¹

reside upon and cultivate the tract for five years and pay a fee of eighteen dollars. If he met these requirements, he received a deed or patent to the land on which he had filed.¹ These terms made the land an outright gift as far as the Scandinavian was concerned, as he was seeking land which he could improve and where he could build his home. The cash outlay was so small that it could be obtained by all. Many of the emigrants worked as laborers in Chicago or other northern cities where, by practicing extreme frugality, they were able in a short time to acquire enough capital to make the journey to Kansas, file their claims at the land office, and purchase the minimum supplies to begin life on the new homesteads. The residence requirement was no deterrent for

²¹Personal letter from Jens B. Nygaard to the author, dated April 9, 1939.

¹Adolph Roenigk, Pioneer History of Kansas (Lincoln, Kansas, 1933), p. 398.

CHAPTER II

PERIOD OF IMMIGRATION

Since a high premium is placed on land ownership in Europe, the Scandinavians came to America with the intention of improving their economic status by becoming land owners. Naturally their first thoughts were centered on the acquisition of a homestead. In order to acquire a quarter section of land under the Homestead Act of 1862, the settler was required to reside upon and cultivate the tract for five years and pay a fee of eighteen dollars. If he met these requirements, he received a deed or patent to the land on which he had filed.¹ These terms made the land an outright gift as far as the Scandinavian was concerned, as he was seeking land which he could improve and where he could build his home. The cash outlay was so small that it could be obtained by all. Many of the emigrants worked as laborers in Chicago or other northern cities where, by practicing extreme frugality, they were able in a short time to acquire enough capital to make the journey to Kansas, file their claims at the land office, and purchase the minimum supplies to begin life on the new homesteads. The residence requirement was no deterrent for the emigrant desired a home of his own and wished to improve the land immediately. The hardships of homesteading were not

¹Adolph Roenigk, Pioneer History of Kansas (Lincoln, Kansas, 1933), p. 299.

hardships in the mind of the Scandinavian if it gave him that most coveted of all possessions, land. Since alternate sections of land, which adjoined the railroad land, were sold by the government, the settler could purchase a second quarter section under the preemption law by making certain improvements and paying the government price of one dollar and a quarter per acre. In addition to the foregoing he could obtain another quarter section under the timber act by planting and cultivating forty acres of timber for a seven year period.² The acreage requirement was later reduced to ten acres, and many of the Scandinavians took advantage of it to increase their holdings.³ A bona fide settler could thus acquire in all four hundred and eighty acres from the government. As land ownership meant social and economic prestige, the Scandinavians who were earnest homeseekers, saw in the prairie land of Kansas, an opportunity to insure their posterity an economic status that they could never have known in Europe.⁴ Evidently they were not to be deterred from their belief in the importance of land ownership even though they had to endure separation from loved ones and face the perils of a new region and a new life.

² Ibid.

³ Personal letter from C. C. Nielson to the author, dated April 9, 1939.

⁴ Roenigk, op. cit., p. 302.

During the years 1880 to 1884 twenty-one homestead grants were consummated on land in Lincoln County on which claims had been filed during the seventies. William Cornelisson, Peter Anderson, James Morgansen, Lars Peter Phillipson, Andrew Weissinger, Anders Olofson, John A. Dane, Jacob L. Nygaard, Matts Mattson, L. P. Nelson, Charles Anderson, Niels Nielson, Peter Martin Larsen and Anders Rasmussen were some of the leaders of the Scandinavian settlement of Lincoln County, whose claims were consummated during the eighties.⁵ Some claims had been granted during the previous decade, and others were issued in the nineties. Many of the settlers lived on these claims all their lives, and the land passed to their children when the homesteaders died. Peter Anderson was still residing on his claim at the time of his death in 1916.⁶ A. Rasmussen lived on his homestead until a few months before his death in 1920, having moved to Lincoln because of his failing health.⁷ Anderson and Rasmussen were Danes. L. P. Nelson, a Swede, died on his homestead in 1916.⁸ Many others, who owned the land until their deaths, moved to Lincoln or to California to spend their declining years, only because they wished to retire from the farm or wished to seek a milder climate in which to spend their remaining years.

⁵Patent Records, I, Lincoln County.

⁶Lincoln Republican, October 12, 1916.

⁷Lincoln Sentinel, March 25, 1920.

⁸Lincoln Republican, October 12, 1916.

Fifty to eighty per cent of the homesteaded land is owned by children of the men who originally filed on the land.⁹ Thus it can be seen that the Scandinavian motive for settlement was to establish homes for themselves and their children. Many of them later added to their homestead acres by purchasing railroad land. Two sections of this land were purchased by the early settlers in Grant township.¹⁰

In their struggle for existence in the bleak northland, the Scandinavians had acquired through the centuries, the traits of fortitude, patience and courage, traits that proved to be valuable assets to their descendants on the plains of Kansas, who had to face trials and perils, equal perhaps, to those experienced by their ancestors in Europe.

The first Scandinavians came to what was later Lincoln County, in February, 1869.¹¹ They surveyed the region, staked out claims, built dugouts, and planted gardens. They were also busy making plans for turning the sod with oxen so that they might raise grain the next year. They were well pleased with their new homes and were anticipating with much pleasure the production of their first crops.

Before the little settlement on Spillman Creek had been

⁹ Personal letter from C.C. Nielson to the author, dated April 2, 1939.

¹⁰ Personal letter from Jens B. Nygaard to the author, dated April 9, 1939.

¹¹ Christian Bernhardt, Indian Raids in Lincoln County, Kansas, 1864 and 1869 (Lincoln, Kansas, 1910), p. 25.

firmly established, it was practically wiped out by the Indians. After the Indian troubles in 1865, the government made treaties with the tribes in Kansas in 1867, which required the cession of their lands to the United States.¹² However, dissension among the Indians caused some of them to disregard the treaties. The Dog Soldier bands under Tall Bull refused to agree to terms of peace. With some two-hundred and fifty warriors, he made sporadic raids in the Republican and Saline valleys during the years of 1868 and 1869.¹³

On May 30, 1869, the little settlement was attacked by a party of sixty Indians, who were probably followers of Tall Bull, and who came down the Spillman Creek valley committing depredation after depredation.¹⁴ It was a beautiful spring day and the settlers were at work in their gardens. So busy were they, that they were unaware of the warring savages, who had followed the wooded banks of the creek, and thus managed to take the settlers by surprise. It is true that the settlers knew of the Dogs and their depredations in that region; also they had been warned of the danger of Indians by the government agents when they filed their claims; but as no raids had occurred since their arrival even the

¹²Frederic L. Paxon, History of the American Frontier, 1763-1893 (Boston, 1924), p. 506.

¹³Mervin H. Garfield, "Defense of the Kansas Frontier," Kansas Historical Collections, XVIII, 469.

¹⁴A. T. Andreas, History of the State of Kansas (Chicago, 1883), p. 1420.

most timid among them forgot their fears. For this reason the raid of 1869 found them unprepared for such an attack. Eskild Lauritzen and his wife, Danish settlers, were working in the field when the Indians discovered them. They killed them and left their bodies lying side by side on the ground. A short distance away they found another Dane, Otto Petersen, who was staking out a place for a garden with a hatchet. They brutally murdered him and hacked his face with his own hatchet.¹⁵ Petersen's body was found several days later by Rev. T. M. Strange and others, who came up the valley after the raid to ascertain the amount of damage done. Petersen and the Lauritizens were buried in the southwest quarter of Section 24, in Grant township, one-half mile south of where the Lutheran Church at Denmark now stands. It was the first burial in the little settlement.¹⁶ The Lauritizens had a small son who escaped death because he was at the home of a neighbor at the time. Two other men and several children, including a son of Rev. Strange, were killed. Two women, and the baby of one, were captured. The child was brutally murdered before the mother's eyes. The two women were carried to Colorado by the Indians, where they were found by United States soldiers in July, 1869. One of them died of her wounds but the other was restored to health after her return to

¹⁵ Saline Valley Register, July 5, 1876, (clipping).

¹⁶ Bernhardt, op. cit., p. 34.

Lincoln County.¹⁷ Thirteen persons were killed and wounded in this raid. The militia had been sent to Spillman Creek in July. The Lauritzen boy and the Christiansen family with whom he was visiting, escaped as they were indoors in a small wooden shanty that they had just completed. The Indians attacked the dwelling; but finally gave up the attempt, whether because they feared news of their depredations down the creek had spread or that there were a number of men in the cabin, it is impossible to ascertain.¹⁸ The small group of immigrants was found the next day by the army and carried to Fort Harker in a government wagon for fear there might be other raids in the near future. The Christiansen men went to Junction City, where they obtained work as blacksmiths. It was not deemed safe to return to the Spillman Creek valley immediately; in fact, it was not until January, 1871, that it was thought wise to begin the return trip. This journey of nearly a hundred miles was made on foot. The men carried their supplies, which included a sack of flour which they protected from the rain at the cost of exposing themselves.¹⁹ They again took up their work of improving their claims. In a short time they were joined by a large company of settlers,

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁸ Interview with C. Christiansen, who survived the raid. He was a child at the time, but recalls the attempts of the Indians to drive the family out of the cabin. *Frontier,*

¹⁹ Ibid.

²¹ Bernhardt, op. cit., p. 48.

which insured greater security from Indian attacks. Company A of the state militia had been sent to Spillman Creek in July, 1869 and remained on patrol duty until November 21. During the following year, the United States army succeeded in quelling the Indian disturbances in northern and western Kansas.²⁰

With the removal of the Indian danger, the settlers again gave their attention to clearing and cultivating the soil. They looked forward with eager anticipation to the production of the first crops on their claims. Perhaps it was just as well that they did not know of the heart breaking discouragements they were to experience before their hopes could be fully realized for they had not counted on the vagaries of the Kansas weather in making their plans. They were soon to learn that work alone will not produce a crop. One of their chroniclers wrote: "They had to contend with floods, and droughts, hot winds and blizzards, cyclones and windstorms, grasshoppers and chinchbugs."²¹ Any one of these meant disaster, but when long droughts were broken by torrential rains that washed away the little vegetation which had survived the drought, the settlers were so disheartened that they began to doubt their own abilities to fight against such odds. Their sufferings were accentuated because they were so far

²⁰Mervin H. Garfield, "Defense of the Kansas Frontier," Kansas Historical Quarterly, I (1931-1932), 469.

²¹Bernhardt, op. cit., p. 48.

removed from their homes and kindred, and the disasters that had overtaken them were entirely foreign to any they had experienced in Europe. A series of unusual rainfalls had greeted their arrival in Kansas and had given them false impressions of the climate. A prominent historian states that "In 1877 the weather changed and for several years there was not enough rain to sustain the crops."²² The dreaded hot winds from the south continued for weeks, while the farmer searched the skies in vain for indications of relief, but he was forced to watch his crops wither and die. Pastures turned brown, and his cattle faced starvation. To try to market them was futile, for there was no price and no market.²³ If his cattle survived, and he obtained food for them, they were often frozen in the winter blizzards which swept down from the northwest with little warning. The wind and snow accompanied by temperatures fifteen or twenty degrees below zero, threatened the lives of men and beasts alike.²⁴ Casualties resulting from such storms were not unusual. One young man, a Swede, who was herding cattle, was caught out in the terrible blizzard of 1871, and his feet were so badly frozen that he lost his toes.²⁵ Much devastation was wrought by hailstorms which

²²Beard, op. cit., II, 152.

²³Bernhardt, op. cit., p. 48.

²⁴Lincoln Beacon, January 21, 1892.

²⁵Personal letter from J.C.Ruppenthal, to the author, dated October 11, 1938.

visited the region at frequent intervals. The Danes had, despite warnings to the effect that it "could not be done," succeeded in establishing productive orchards. The destructive hailstorm of May 21, 1896, not only destroyed the fruit, but stripped the bark from the trees, so that many of them died.²⁶ Tragedies of this type made pioneer life a burden; yet the settlers refused to surrender to the elements, and in most instances succeeded eventually in establishing comfortable homes for themselves and their children.²⁷

One of the greatest disasters experienced by the Scandinavian colony was the grasshopper plague of 1874, which swept across Kansas and Nebraska destroying everything in its wake. Lincoln County suffered severely. Reports show that 750 persons petitioned the county for rations and 600 applied for clothing. According to a Kansas historian "More than one-fourth of the whole population of the county asked for aid."²⁸ Even such an overwhelming disaster did not destroy the Scandinavians' faith in the new country. Although their crops had been utterly destroyed, which meant that they were face to face with famine and starvation, they did not desert their homesteads. Governor Osborn called a special session of the legislature which, after some debate, decided that it would

²⁶ Lincoln Beacon, May 21, 1896.

²⁷ C. Christiansen in an interview with the author, November 12, 1938.

²⁸ Charles R. Tuttle, op. cit., p. 626.

be best to allow each county, that desired to do so, to issue bonds to take care of its destitute. Lincoln County was permitted to issue \$3000 worth of bonds for which a levy for a sinking fund was not to be permitted for at least ten years.²⁹ Emergency relief committees were organized by the state and immediate relief was sent to the people who needed it. The Danes did not desire relief, but many of them were forced to accept it for a time at least. Some of them found a method of helping themselves; after rations had been provided for their families, the men went east to work during the winter months. The women, forced to remain at home on the lonely claims, bore the brunt of the burden. They had to carry in fuel and care for the small children. If a child were sick, there was no money for a physician's services could he have reached the distant claims, when travel was generally impossible during the winter months. Their cemeteries and the obituary lists in the papers of that day are testimonials that death took a heavy toll of these small lives during the pioneering period. No one can measure the suffering and privations endured by these pioneer women. They suffered the extreme loneliness that was the lot of all who lived beyond the settled areas. The men continued the practice of going east to work during the winter months until their farms became paying propositions. As late as 1880 four

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Frank W. Blackmar, op. cit., p. 780.

of the settlers left the community to seek work in the east.³⁰

The nucleus of the Scandinavian settlement in Lincoln County was, as has been stated, the Spillman Creek colony, which was founded in February, 1869. The Christiansen brothers, Lorentz and Peter and their families; Eskild Lauritzen, wife and child; and Otto Petersen, a single man, were the first to arrive.³¹ Lauritzen had been a farmer in the old country; Petersen was a jeweler, and the Christiansen brothers had been blacksmiths all their lives. They were not very well fitted to cope with the dangers of the wilderness. Their very first homes were dugouts along the creek bank. The first house was built by the Christiansen brothers in a bend of Spillman Creek. Lauritzen built a log house on his claim which the family shared with Petersen. It was probably a small house, but this was one of the accepted hardships of pioneer life. A new arrival had no shelter of his own until a dugout or some crude hut was built. Yet he was assured shelter as the pioneer always left the "latch string out," and the little that he had was shared with the latest arrival.³²

Emigrants continued to join the Spillman Creek settlement. The majority of them were from Denmark, Iceland and Schleswig. One writer characterized them thus: "They were fine, healthy men and women, they made an interesting picture as they took

³⁰Lincoln County Register, August 13, 1880.

³¹Bernhardt, op. cit., p. 25.

³²Ibid., p. 26.

up life on the prairie."³³ A number of Norwegians and Swedes also joined the colony. Their homesteads soon spread over Grant township and extended into the adjoining townships.³⁴ Sometimes four families or four men would erect one home of four rooms so that each room was located on a different quarter section of land, thus allowing each to live on his claim, yet permitting him to share the cost of building, a heavy item of expense in that region, and also permitting him to feel more secure in case of Indian raids.³⁵

During the seventies the little settlement increased rapidly. A man by the name of Kolding opened a store on the south side of Spillman Creek. This saved the farmers the long drive to Lincoln Center to obtain merchandise. A few years later the settlement was granted a post office which was called Denmark. P. L. Jensen was appointed postmaster. He maintained the office together with a general store, which he opened in 1873, in a log house on his claim.³⁶ Lorentz Christiansen opened the first blacksmith shop in the settlement. By 1880, the center of the Scandinavian settlement was Denmark,

³³Waldron, op. cit., p. 21.

³⁴S. B. Wollensen, in an interview with the author, November 12, 1938.

³⁵Peter Henry Pearson, Prairie Vikings (East Orange, N.J., 1927), p. 19.

³⁶Personal letter from Jens B. Nygaard to the author, dated April 9, 1939.

a rural trading point approximately seven miles west and three miles north of the county seat. However, not all of the Scandinavians of the county were found in this group. They were scattered throughout the county. Some of the immigrants who were professional men or skilled laborers, and were not interested in farming settled in the city of Lincoln Center.

During the first few years of its history, a constant stream of emigrants poured into the settlement. John T. and Peter M. Emquist, and Peter J. Johnson, Swedes, joined the colony in the early seventies. The Emquists later moved to Lindsborg and Peter J. Johnson moved to Marquette.³⁷ Another group of Danes also joined the little group on Spillman Creek. Among them were H. L. Hansen, H. P. Bernhardt, C. Bernhardt, John Bernhardt, Matts Mattson and the two Kreiser families.³⁸ In 1871 C. Bernhardt left Kansas for Europe. He returned the next year with a group of about forty emigrants. Each individual brought with him about \$100 to build his new home.³⁹ Most of the group had been small land holders or skilled laborers in Denmark and had saved money to begin anew in the new world.

The state census gives an indication of the nationalities

³⁷ Rev. Alfred Bergin, "The Swedish Settlements in Kansas," Kansas State Historical Collections XI, 34.

³⁸ Barr, op. cit., p. 96.

³⁹ Reminiscence by C. Bernhardt in Lincoln Beacon, February 19, 1891.

of the Scandinavian settlers in Lincoln County and the rapid growth of the settlement. In 1870 there were eighteen Scandinavians in the county. Fifteen of them were classified as farmers and three were housewives. There were eleven Danes, six Swedes, and one Norwegian.⁴⁰ These statistics seem to indicate that the first immigrants were young men, or married men who had left their families at home until the new homes had been established on a permanent basis. Some of them came from Wisconsin and Illinois, and returned for their families as soon as they had erected shelters for them.

Eighty-three persons of Scandinavian descent were living in the county in 1875. All but one of the five organized townships reported Scandinavian inhabitants.⁴¹ Grant led the list with fifty-two. In 1895 the census listed two hundred and sixty-four persons of Scandinavian birth. One hundred and ninety-one were Danes; fifty-five, Swedes; and eighteen, Norwegians; one hundred and thirty-two of them resided in Grant township. Fourteen of the twenty townships in the county recorded Scandinavian inhabitants in this census.⁴² The above figures indicate that the peak of the Scandinavian immigration came about 1890.

As their numbers increased, and more cultivation gave hopes of greater economic security, the settlers began to

⁴⁰State Census for 1870.

⁴¹State Census for 1875.

⁴²State Census for 1895.

look forward to the day when their trials and privations would cease. However, increased production does not always mean increased prosperity; a truism that they soon learned by experience. Lack of transportation and the rapid development of the agricultural West combined to decrease the prices of farm commodities. The following prices were general during this period:

Eggs were from three to six cents a dozen; butter five or six cents a pound; corn from eight to eleven cents per bushel; wheat not worth more than the hauling; fat hogs two and one-half cents per pound; and cattle and horses in proportion. But this was not all. As late as 1876 sugar sold in Lincoln Center at eighteen cents per pound; coffee from forty to fifty; tobacco, eighty cents; shoes and clothing were entirely in proportion to these prices, so it is next to a miracle that the pioneers lived through it.⁴³

In 1891 horses were reported as being unsalable, fat cattle brought from fifteen to twenty-five dollars, which meant that the farmers received little or no returns on their investment and labor.

The people of Lincoln County believed that a railroad through the county would afford them better prices as it would afford an outlet for their surplus products. Bonds to the amount of \$120,000, bearing six per cent interest for thirty years, were voted on the promise that a main line railroad would cross the county, and that a division point would be established in Lincoln. In 1892 the Denmark correspondent in the Lincoln Beacon complained that the railroad

⁴³ Bernhardt, op. cit., p. 48. 20, 1892.

which was built through Lincoln in 1886 was not a main line, that it missed the village of Denmark by four miles, and that Lincoln was not made a division point on the line.⁴⁴ The farmers of Grant township were compelled to haul their grain to the nearest shipping point four miles away, or to Lincoln, and were forced to pay exorbitant freight rates. Another cause of dissatisfaction was the fact that they did not have a daily mail service. The mail had to be carried to Denmark from the railroad, but the roads were often impassable so regular service could not be maintained.

The settlers in the northern part of the county, where the Scandinavian element dominated, had another transportation problem, which caused much grief before it was finally solved to their satisfaction. This was the desire for a bridge over Spillman creek on the township line between Marion and Grant townships. Vesper, in Marion township, was the site of the nearest elevator, but the farmers could not reach it when it was impossible to ford the creek. They petitioned the county commissioners without results. They petitioned again and in the end the commissioners yielded, and a bridge was promised. The citizens of Denmark subscribed \$200 toward the cost and the county appropriated money to complete its construction.⁴⁵ This struggle illustrates the Danish determination to obtain that which he believes is one of his rights.

⁴⁴Lincoln Beacon, January 14, 1892. 1880.

⁴⁵Lincoln Republican, October 20, 1892.

The Scandinavians are reluctant to ask favors, but they do insist on the strict observance of their rights and privileges.

Despite the many difficulties suffered by the settlers, their faith in the land was justified, for a series of good crops in the early nineties proved that the land could produce under favorable circumstances. Even though prices were far from normal, the Danes probably because they were thrifty and orderly by nature and training, were able to secure some of the improvements they needed. Their money was carefully hoarded and was spent on the necessary machinery and needed improvements. New homes were built, and it was a custom to celebrate their completion with house warmings to which the entire community was invited.⁴⁶ Fields were fenced, wells drilled, windmills erected and other improvements made. The years 1891 and 1892 were unusually prosperous, if one judges from the number of buildings erected in the community. Two large residence properties were built, two farms were fenced, and a "new spring wagon, the first one made in Denmark, to carry the Bernhardt children to school," was built.⁴⁷ Buggies were also introduced; but as they were considered the height of luxury, the family who could thus ride to church "in state" was the envy of the neighbors.

In 1892 the wheat in the neighborhood averaged twenty-five bushels to the acre, with some fields yielding as high

⁴⁶Lincoln County Register, August 25, 1880.

⁴⁷Lincoln Beacon, October 20, 1891.

as thirty-five bushels. Such a crop meant a heavy harvest, which required the concentrated efforts of the community. Often times outside labor was needed. An employment office was sometimes maintained in Lincoln Center where the farmers could obtain transient harvest hands. The stores conducted special harvest sales and all social affairs were postponed until the harvest was over. The women and girls were very busy preparing food for the hungry workers, which was quite a task as the Danes observed the old world custom of serving afternoon coffee and lunch to the harvesters. It is probable that all worked with a will even though it meant long hours; for it meant that they were well on the way to the economic security they had hoped for when they filed on the land. Improved harvests called for improved machinery. The Danes made a small contribution to the demand for better machinery. C. Jensen of Denmark invented a thresher dust cap for which an eastern firm offered him \$5,000.⁴⁸

The discovery of coal banks in the central and west central parts of the county supplemented the farm income of a number of families. These banks produced a fair grade of coal, which brought a good income to the owners. This was doubly appreciated as the best sale for the product was during the winter months when the farm income was at its lowest ebb. In Central Kansas there is little timber to supply fuel, and much of the original timber had been used during the seventies, so

⁴⁸ Ibid., April 2, 1891.

the demand for Lincoln County coal was quite extensive; sales being made in all parts of that section of the state. The price was quoted at three dollars and twenty-five cents per ton in 1892.⁴⁹ Other manifestations of prosperity were in evidence among the Danes at this time. Their children were sent to college, they bought carriages, organs were purchased for the family parlors, and some of them made trips to Europe. Niels Nelson and wife left in November, 1892 to spend the winter in Denmark.⁵⁰ Another visitor to Europe that year was Jack Knudson, who went to visit his relatives.⁵¹ William Holmberg and family went to Fresno, California to make their home. A newspaper item of the day stated: "They had resided in Denmark twenty-one years, had accumulated a competence and desired to spend their last years in a milder climate."⁵² In twenty years these brave pioneers had made the soil produce not only a fair living, but they had wrested from it the luxuries of life as well. All the Scandinavians, and the Danes in particular, have been noted for their cooperative enterprises. They brought with them to the plains of Kansas some of these ideas, for a

⁴⁹ Ibid., January 14, 1892.

⁵⁰ Ibid., November 24, 1892.

⁵¹ Ibid., July 21, 1892.

⁵² Ibid., January 28, 1892.

cooperative creamery was built in Denmark in 1892. Although it was a general community enterprise, the Danes thought of it as their own peculiar institution since the later immigrants were familiar with the cooperative creamery in Denmark, Europe.⁵³ When the Framers Alliance made an appeal to the farmers of Kansas, the Scandinavians were among the first to heed this call. Many of the Danes of the Denmark community were members of the organization. C. Bernhardt was secretary and one of the most active workers, and also served as delegate to the state organization. Another cooperative enterprise was the construction of an elevator at Denmark. A board of directors was chosen, funds were raised, and officers of the alliance were named. J. Nygaard was made president, and C. Bernhardt was chosen secretary.⁵⁴

This settlement, which was less than thirty years old, which had so narrowly escaped annihilation by the Indians in 1869, which had faced economic ruin for years; and had battled storms, droughts and grasshoppers, was at last on the road to prosperity. City, where the United States Land Office was located until its removal to Salina in 1871. Here they filed the claims for their homesteads and collected the supplies they needed to begin their new enterprise. They selected Lincoln County so that they would have enough land for the entire

⁵³Thomas Peter Christensen, "The Danish Settlements in Kansas," Kansas Historical Collections, XVII, 302.

⁵⁴Lincoln Beacon, June 9, 1892.

CHAPTER III

SCANDINAVIAN INFLUENCES

group that they might be
 Even during the perils of the first years of pioneering,
 they succeeded in maintaining their church. Although a church
 was
 Though the economic factor was the dominant motive for
 Scandinavian colonization, it was not the only one. The
 religious motive was also an impelling influence. Most of
 the Scandinavians in the United States, and this is particu-
 larly true of the Danes, are Lutherans. The Danes belong to
 the Danish Evangelical Church. One group in this church,
 called the Grundtvigans, is composed largely of the "intel-
 lectuals."¹ To them it is the Apostolic creed rather than
 the Bible that is divinely inspired.² The members of this
 faith desired to preserve their church, but found it diffi-
 cult to do so while their members were residents of Chicago
 or were scattered throughout Wisconsin and other northern
 states. For this reason they were intensely interested in
 the proposals of the emigrant companies for settlement in
 Kansas. The group that came to Lincoln County gathered at
 Junction City, where the United States Land Office was located
 until its removal to Salina in 1871. Here they filed the
 claims for their homesteads and collected the supplies they
 needed to begin their new enterprise. They selected Lincoln
 County so that they would have enough land for the entire

¹Waldron, op. cit., p. 22.

²Ibid.

group that they might be assured a church congregation.³ Even during the perils of the first years of pioneering, they succeeded in maintaining their church. Although a church was not formally established until 1877, services were held in the homes.⁴ The first church building was erected in 1878. It was built of native stone, and was constructed with an outlay of only one hundred dollars in cash. All local material that could be found was used; all the labor was a volunteer contribution.⁵ This statement cannot adequately picture the sacrifices made by these pioneers. Money was a scarce article in that day and though the cash outlay seems infinitesimal for the purpose it served, it was a large sum for these people who were engaged in making a living from the few acres that they had been able to cultivate. Some of them were still living in dugouts; all of them were anxious to cultivate more land. Every hour was valuable if they were to wrest a sustenance from the virgin soil. To donate their labor was no small sacrifice. Their desire to have a place of worship overcame all selfish desires. They were earnest and sincere in their religious worship, and desired to establish a church that their children might be brought up in the faith. They

³Personal letter from P. W. Holm to the author, dated June 12, 1939.

⁴Waldron, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

⁵Rev. Harold Peterson in an interview with the author, April 1, 1939.

had chosen America as their adopted land partly because they were guaranteed the religious freedom that they prized so highly.

Some of the men who helped to build the church were Jens Morgensen, Nels Nielson, Lars Rasmussen, H. C. Errebo, and K. P. Holm.⁶ As some of the records have been lost, this list cannot be considered all inclusive. It is very probable that nearly all the settlers donated their services. In 1880 the members numbered about forty. In addition to the above-named members, the membership included the Christiansen, Anderson, Hansen, Betelsen, Jensen, Bernhardt, Mattson, Nielson, Broderson, Johansen, and Bogh families.⁷

The congregation was not large enough to afford the services of a regular minister, so for a number of years they were dependent upon the services of visiting ministers. For a short time Rev. George Petersen, a Dane from Cloud County, served the church. He spoke English, Swedish, and Danish and was a very fluent speaker and an excellent scholar. The congregation was not large enough to retain his services long.⁸

Services were not always regular in those years, even when they had a regular minister, for oftentimes there was no

⁶S. B. Wollensen in a personal interview with the author, November 12, 1938.

⁷Secretary's Record of the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark.

⁸Lincoln Beacon, February 12, 1891.

congregation. The severity of the winter blizzards, impassable roads, lack of bridges, and distance from the church prevented regular attendance.

The church's influence was extended by the organization of a Danish ladies aid society (kvindeforening) and a young people's society (ungdomforening). The latter organization carried out the Grundtvigian principle, that a healthy religious belief is developed through recreation and culture.

The establishment of vacation schools also aided in the development of this principle.⁹ At first the Danish language prevailed in the church, but it soon became the custom to deliver part of the sermons in English. A concession was made to the older members of having one sermon a month in the Danish language. This custom is still practiced.¹⁰

This little group of religious adherents was torn asunder by a religious dissension in 1893. Disagreement over the question of ritual caused such a rift that permanent division was the result. The dogmatic group severed its relation with the older church and established the Mission Circle Church.¹¹ James Peter Peterson, who came to Denmark, Kansas, in 1882, was one of the founders of this church. It has gradually declined in both membership and influence, and is now open

⁹Thomas Peter Christensen, "The Danish Settlements in Kansas," Kansas Historical Collections, XVII, 301.

¹⁰Personal letter from P. W. Holm to the author, dated June 12, 1939.

¹¹Rev. Harold Petersen, in an interview with the author, April 1, 1939.

only for funerals.¹² Were it not for the influence of the older members of the congregation, a reunion could probably be affected with the Evangelical group, as the younger members of both churches place little emphasis on ritual and dogma and are inclined to forget the early differences.

The Danes have always had a true and sincere appreciation of the value of education. When they migrated to America, they brought with them their educational ideals and their high esteem of intellectual attainments. Despite the handicaps of pioneer life they were determined that their youth should have the highest educational privileges that could be secured.

Though their ambitions knew no limit they were compelled by necessity to begin in an humble manner. The first school building, which was constructed of logs, was built in 1875. Its furnishings were meagre when compared to the school buildings which they had known in Europe. But it was a beginning. This one was replaced by a frame building which in turn gave way in 1891 to a larger building of native stone. Evidently they desired a substantial building for the published notice calling for bids for its construction specified that it must be of stone and twenty-three feet by thirty feet on the outside with walls eighteen inches thick.¹³

In these buildings the children of the founders obtained their elementary training. Although it was a common practice

¹²Ibid., July 21, 1882.

¹³Lincoln Beacon, April 23, 1891.

in most pioneer communities to keep children at home to help with the farm work, the Danes evidently did not do so for the published lists of pupils with perfect attendance records for the term always included many of the Scandinavian students. After the elementary course was completed, they went to Lincoln where they enrolled in the academy of Lincoln College, as it was then called. Many of the Scandinavian young people enrolled in the Lincoln Normal which held sessions during the summer months.¹⁴ Scandinavians from all parts of the county were enrolled in this institution term after term as teaching seemed to be their choice profession. Several of the youths returned to Denmark to teach the "home school". The remuneration was small averaging about thirty-five dollars a month, with the term averaging six months. A. T. Biggs, who was county superintendent for a number of years during the eighties, was a very progressive school man and insisted on accurate school records and regular attendance at the county teachers' meetings, which were held once a month during the school year.¹⁵ As transportation was handicapped by lack of roads and bridges, the county was divided into districts, and each district held its own meeting. Every teacher read a paper or took part in a forum discussion. Despite their poor facilities in the way of equipment and their meagre salaries, these young men and women were professionally minded to a

¹⁴Ibid., July 21, 1982.

¹⁵Ibid.

high degree. Reports of their meetings indicate that the Scandinavian teachers were as loyal as any member of the profession. A number of them attended the meeting of the state association at Topeka each year at Christmas time. The fact that they were required to forego a Christmas vacation to do so did not seem to affect the attendance.

After the Lincoln High School was founded, the Scandinavian young people received their secondary training in this institution. Many of them, in order to reduce expenses, boarded themselves, taking with them each Monday morning enough supplies from home to last them a week. Others boarded in town. For large families, which were not uncommon among the pioneers of that period it was often an expensive undertaking to have two or three children enrolled in high school at the same time.

Many of them continued their schooling after graduation from high school. The young men and women who planned to teach generally attended the Emporia Normal and the Kansas State College. Others went to Kansas Wesleyan at Salina, Kansas University, or to the Danish Lutheran College at Des Moines, Iowa.¹⁶ C. Bernhardt, the Denmark correspondent for the Lincoln Beacon, mentioned the names of four youths who were leaving Denmark in August, 1892, for various colleges and then asked the question, "Where are the ignorant foreigners

¹⁶Rev. Harold Petersen in an Interview with the author April 1, 1939.

that it takes four generations to civilize?"¹⁷

The Danes are also interested in business, and many of them are successful business men. Many of their young men have attended business colleges in Salina, Topeka, and Hutchinson. Others have studied in various trade and technical schools.

The Scandinavians have succeeded in carrying on their belief that every youth should have either a liberal arts education or vocational training. They have insisted on high educational standards, so that their desires might be realized. As a result, they have given their county and state a well trained citizenry.¹⁸

Several of the Lincoln County Scandinavians contributed not only to the development of Lincoln County, but carried on their work in other communities as well. O. J. Morgensen of Denmark left there in April, 1892, to become an instructor of the English language in the Danish theological college at Elkhorn, Iowa. Five years later he accepted a position as instructor of music and English in the Lutheran parochial school at Perth Amboy, New Jersey.¹⁹

A love of music and a natural musical ability is one of the Scandinavian characteristics. One of the Lincoln County

¹⁷Lincoln Beacon, August 18, 1892.

¹⁸Speech of Senator Capper as reported in Topeka Journal, July 20, 1916.

¹⁹Lincoln Beacon, August 20, 1896.

group, Hjalmar Bernhardt, who was educated in the music department of Bethany College, attained distinction as a composer of solos for stringed instruments. He was a member of the faculty of the Kansas Wesleyan school of music for fifteen years.²⁰

Another Bernhardt, Christian by name, who came to the Danish settlement immediately after its founding, became famous throughout the county for his pithy news column in the Lincoln Beacon. He is the author of Indian Raids in Lincoln County, 1864-1869, which was published in 1910, and is an important contribution to the history and literature of the county. He was instrumental in securing the funds for the erection of a monument in Lincoln to the memory of the pioneers who were killed in the Indian raid in Spillman valley in 1869.²¹

Dr. Alfred Hultner, a Swedish physician, was well known in Lincoln and adjoining counties for many years. He was born in Lindkoping, Sweden. His medical training was received at the Universities of Upsala and Heidelberg. He began his medical practice in Honduras, whence he migrated to the United States, later drifting to Kansas and beginning his practice in Lincoln in 1898. The master of five languages: German,

²⁰Illustrations, Kansas, Edited by Robert Morton Baldwin and Sara Mullin Baldwin, (Hebron, Nebraska, 1933), p. 100.

²¹Personal letter from J. C. Ruppenthal, to the author, dated October 19, 1938.

²⁴Rev. Harold Petersen in an interview with the author, April 1, 1939.

Spanish, Danish, Swedish, and English, he was very popular with the immigrant groups, but his popularity was not confined to these groups.²²

Even the average Scandinavian who quietly managed his little business establishment or farmed his homestead, was often an individual of linguistic ability and the possessor of a college degree. One individual, a native of Copenhagen, who was postmaster of Denmark and the owner of a store there during the nineties, spoke four languages. Like many of the other settlers he was very successful in his business enterprises and acquired much property.²³ He was not an exceptional character, however, for many of the earlier settlers were educated men who possessed an accurate knowledge of world affairs and took an interest in state and national affairs. One will find among the Scandinavians today a large number of college graduates who are fifty or more years of age.²⁴

While the Danes have readily adapted themselves to the political institutions of the new world and have accepted its social customs, they have retained a few of the social forms of the old world. Although they are a quiet and retiring people by nature, they are a sociable group when among their own kind. They find many occasions for old fashioned

²²Barr, op. cit., p. 26.

²³Lincoln Beacon, February 11, 1892.

²⁴Rev. Harold Petersen in an interview with the author, April 1, 1939.

"get-togethers." Weddings, golden weddings, and birthdays are observed with the proper festivities. Music, dancing, and group singing are the favorite amusements. The Grundtvigians are very fond of group singing, but unless it is held in the church, it is often humanistic rather than religious in nature.²⁵ According to a member of the settlement, "Some of the old dances are still danced occasionally; the old folk dances are also exhibited occasionally."²⁶ Many of the card games played in Europe are still popular with the older inhabitants.

The old world custom of observing Christmas is often practiced. Like the old English celebration, the festivities begin on Christmas eve and continue to the Twelfth Night or "Little Christmas Day," as they call it.²⁷

The women have retained their love of fine needlework and are experts in this line. Many of them are also excellent seamstresses. Much of their needlework is done during the "afternoon coffee," which is practically an institution with the Danes. In mid afternoon coffee and cakes are served to any chance caller, while many families observe this practice daily among themselves. The cakes are made from old world

²⁵Thomas Peter Christensen, "The Danish Settlement in Kansas," Kansas Historical Collections, XVII, 302.

²⁶Personal letter from P. W. Holm to the author, dated June 12, 1939.

²⁷Thomas Peter Christensen, "The Danish Settlements in Kansas," Kansas Historical Collections, XVII, 302.

recipes, and are highly prized by the Scandinavians. The Swedes and Norwegians have many breads and cakes that are made from the same recipes used by the Danes. The women are orderly and neat; their homes reflect their housekeeping abilities.²⁸

Another unifying influence is the Danish-American press which also helps to preserve the Lutheran spiritual influence. Dannevirke, a Grundtvigian publication, published at Cedar Falls, Iowa, is found in the homes of the members of that group of Lutherans. The most widely read paper is the Danske Pioneer (The Danish Pioneer) which is published at Omaha, Nebraska. The Luthersh Ugeblad (The Lutheran Weekly Paper), is the most popular paper with The Inner Mission group. It is published at Blair, Nebraska. The women also have their paper, the Kvinden Og Hjemmet (Women and Home), which is published at Cedar Rapids.²⁹ There are no Danish dailies.

In recent years American papers and magazines have found their way into the Scandinavian homes as many of the second generation speak only English.

The Scandinavians are upright and honest citizens, who seem to have a high respect for laws and law enforcement. Practically all of them have become citizens of the United States, and are very proud of their citizenship. Many Danes consider the right of suffrage a privilege, and seldom abuse

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

it by neglecting to cast their votes at the polls. They probably demand this right because they respect good government and believe that each individual is personally obligated to do his share by expressing his preference on election day. They do not care to enter further into the political struggle as very few of them lean toward politics. Not many Danes have a desire for public office.³⁰ This must be kept in mind if an attempt is made to reconcile their intellectual and social abilities with their reluctance to hold public office.

None of the Lincoln County group has held state offices and only a few of them have sought and held county offices. Mr. J. L. Nygaard was county commissioner in the eighties. S. H. Bogh held the office of recorder of deeds, and Mr. Anton Wandt was county surveyor one term.³¹

Although they did not care to participate in public controversies, they could and did take a firm stand when their economic interests were threatened. In 1891, low prices, high transportation costs, and dissatisfaction with the tariff policy and with the growing power of the trusts, drove the Scandinavians to unite their political fortunes with the "great populist movement that alarmed political leaders from Penobscot to the Golden Gate", and which was fast converting the agrarian group of the Middle West.³² A People's Party

³⁰Personal letter from J.L.Nygaard to the author, dated April 9, 1939.

³¹Ibid.

³²Beard, op. cit., II, 152.

rally was held at Denmark in October, 1891, which was reported as "the biggest political meeting ever held at Denmark."³³

Another cause for elation over this meeting, according to the correspondent who reported it, was the fact that there were six ladies present, the largest number that had ever attended a political rally in that community. The correspondent wrote:

"We regard this increased interest in politics by the women as one of the best signs of the times. If our movement was not right, our women would not be with us."³⁴

During the winter a People's Party Club was organized at Denmark. Everyone was urged to join it, by C. Bernhardt, one of its founders. He wrote:

We wish to state that it is desirable for everyone who believes in the demands of our platform to join. Let us begin to work and study our platform. If we diligently search for the truth, we will be apt to find it. At any rate we will be better prepared to withstand the sleek-tongued professional politicians.³⁵

A county rally was held on Independence Day at Lincoln with an estimated attendance of eight hundred. The county convention held that fall was well attended by the Scandinavians, and they had a hand in the framing of a set of resolutions which condemned monopolies and railroad favoritism.³⁶

The complete Populist county ticket was elected in November. Grant Township and Lincoln County also supported the

³³Lincoln Beacon, October 20, 1891.

³⁴Ibid., December 29, 1891.

³⁵Lincoln Beacon, February 25, 1892.

³⁶Ibid., September 8, 1892.

State and National Populist ticket; Weaver carried the township 95 to 26. The Populist sentiment did not die in Lincoln County after the election for in December of that year Mary Lease gave an address in Lincoln which caused the Danish correspondent to hail her as a "wonder among women and even among our ablest men orators."³⁷

Despite the fact that crops were larger than usual during the middle nineties, dissatisfaction was still evident on account of the low prices paid for farm commodities. There had been a steady decline of farm prices between 1881 and 1894. In 1881 corn was eighty-three cents a bushel, while in 1890 it brought only twenty-eight cents. Wheat prices declined from one dollar and nineteen cents in 1881 to forty-nine cents in 1894.³⁸ The following market quotations from the Lincoln Beacon of June 25, 1896, gives an insight into the reasons for this agrarian unrest:

Corn-----	.14	Eggs-----	.04
Wheat-----	.40	Hens-----	.035
Butter-----	.05	Beef Cattle-	.0375

With such prices being paid for their products, and high prices being demanded for the articles they had to buy, such as sugar, clothing, and binder twine, the farmer was driven to seek relief through political channels.

Again in 1896, they turned to the Populist cause, hoping

³⁷ Ibid., December 29, 1892.

³⁸ W. P. Harrington, "The Populist Party in Kansas," Kansas Historical Collections, XVI, 408.

to receive aid from that source. Grant Township and Lincoln County gave their votes to Bryan and Watson, and to J.W. Leedy, the Populist candidate for governor.³⁹

The Scandinavians are not always governed by party allegiance, preferring to support the party that indorses the issues that appeal to them. In 1916 they gave Wilson a large majority, but in 1920, they gave their support to Harding and the Republican State candidates. In 1932 and in 1936 they supported the Democratic Party.⁴⁰

Though the Danes are not anxious to take an active part in politics, they do maintain an independent attitude and insist on fair play for all. They are men of strength of purpose, who have adapted themselves to the conditions found in America. They have improved their own opportunities and have tried to adapt themselves to the social and political institutions of the new world.⁴¹

The Dane places a high value on personal integrity. He keeps his word and conducts his business activities in an honorable manner, preferring to deal on a "cash basis." Although he is a champion of modern improvements, he will not indulge in any luxuries unless he has funds in the bank

³⁹Ibid., November 5, 1896.

⁴⁰Personal letter from Edward Larsen to the author, dated June 12, 1939.

⁴¹Biographical History, Compiled by Lewis Publishing Company (2 vols., Chicago, 1902), I, 566.

sufficient to pay for them. Until the recent depression, one could say without boasting that practically every Danish citizen had no debts and no mortgages.⁴² Modern homes were built, automobiles were bought, and other properties acquired with money that had been saved for that purpose; they did not buy on the installment plan. The following item by the editor of the Lincoln Beacon illustrates this characteristic trait of the Scandinavians:

The only two delinquent subscribers at the Denmark Post Office are the only two Americans who take the Beacon. Every Dane, Norwegian and German (more Danes) at that office is paid up in advance. The Dane has a constitutional antipathy to debt.⁴³

The practice of such policies have won them the respect of their fellow citizens, and brought prosperity to the Scandinavians. They are a loyal group of law abiding citizens who have established high ideals of culture and patriotism.⁴⁴

⁴²Lincoln Beacon, March 24, 1892.

⁴³Ibid., March 3, 1892.

⁴⁴Biographical History, I, 566.

CHAPTER IV

RECENT HISTORY OF THE SETTLEMENT

Shortly after the outbreak of the World War the Scandinavians of this study found themselves well on the road to prosperity. Several years of more than average rainfall, and the higher prices paid for grain and cattle, because of European demand, increased their farm income materially. The county shared with the rest of the state the higher prices paid for its chief commodities, wheat and beef. In 1917 the value of wheat per acre for the entire state was \$24.16.¹ In 1918 it had increased to \$28.06, which indicates a decided advance over the five-year average (1912-1916) of \$14.02.² The results of this increased income were evident in the purchase of farm machinery, the erection of modern homes, and the purchase of automobiles. Many of the Danes added to their original land holdings during these years. In 1918 the majority of them owned from one-fourth to one-half a section of land; while a number of them had farms of 400 acres.³ M. Rasmussen, John Anderson, H. C. Errebo, Jas. Morgenson, Ole Peterson, Hans Nelson, and H. P. Jensen were the owners of

¹Year Book of Department of Agriculture, 1917 (Washington, 1918), p. 619.

²Year Book of the Department of Agriculture, 1918 (Washington, 1919), p. 467.

³Standard Atlas of Lincoln County (Chicago, 1918), p. 8.

farms which averaged 350 acres.⁴ Several farmers doubled their acreages by renting land. Since Lincoln County is in the wheat growing region of central Kansas, it produced its share of the wheat needed for overseas consumption. This created a demand for wheat land which stimulated land prices.

The Scandinavian homes are large two-story buildings generally of native stone, and are often supplied with ~~fact~~ water, gas, and other modern conveniences.⁵ The Danes own farm tractors and automobiles; have telephones and radios; subscribe to daily papers and read contemporary magazines; and give their children music lessons on their own musical instruments.⁶ They have adopted modern methods, and have obtained for themselves and their children all the cultural and social advantages society has to offer. Their youth, while at college, have met other young people and succumbed to college romances, which have resulted in their marrying young people of other nationalities from other communities. Generally the weddings have been elaborate affairs celebrated in the approved manner of the period; yet the Danish customs have not been entirely disregarded. As a rule, the dances and music have been Danish. The weddings have usually been followed by honeymoons in Colorado and other western states.

⁴Ibid. August 12, 1920.

⁵Topeka Journal, October 12, 1915.

⁶Mrs. S. B. Wollensen in an interview with the author, November 12, 1938.

If the bridegroom was a Dane, they returned to the neighborhood and rented a farm or lived on one that had been presented to them by his parents.⁷ The parents then moved to Lincoln, the county seat, or went to California to spend of their declining years. The homesteads were not sold if there were sons in the family.

Another evidence of more prosperous times was the fact that vacation trips to Colorado and California seemed to be common experiences. Oftentimes the entire family enjoyed such a vacation.⁸

The war brought a building boom to their rural trading point, Denmark. In the spring of 1917 five new store buildings of stone were erected by John Anderson. They were rented by a company which established a general store, the proprietor of a shoe store, a garage mechanic, a barber, and the owner of a restaurant.⁹ A bank building was completed several months later, and was opened to the public July 12, 1917. The first day the Denmark State Bank opened for business \$3,200 was deposited.¹⁰ The extension of the Salina Northern, a branch railroad line which connects Denmark with the Union Pacific at Salina, was partly responsible for the increased building

⁷Lincoln Sentinel, April 5, 1920.

⁸Ibid., August 12, 1920.

⁹Lincoln Republican, June 14, 1917.

¹⁰Ibid., July 19, 1917.

¹¹Ibid., May 3, 1917.

activities. This railroad line gave the farmers the transportation facilities they had always wanted. They could ship their grain from their own elevator; thus eliminating the drive to Vesper or to Lincoln, stations on the northern branch of the Union Pacific. A railroad depot was built, five new residences were constructed in Denmark and bids were let for the erection of a two-room schoolhouse.¹¹

When the United States entered the World War, the Scandinavians "did their bit" at home and abroad. Five of the Denmark youths enlisted for service in the United States army immediately following the declaration of war by the United States.¹² Two of them, Eric and Esborn Peterson, were brothers. Esborn enlisted in the ambulance corps. The Scandinavian youths, who registered under the Selective Service Act, were found to be almost without exception in perfect health and very few of them had physical defects of any kind. They were sent to Camp Funston, which was located about a hundred miles from Lincoln. Each group that left Lincoln was given a picnic supper on the courthouse lawn by the community. Their relatives often made week end trips to the camp taking with them the native Danish cakes and other delicacies. Mufflers, socks and other home made articles were also carried to the new recruits. Several of the Lincoln youths saw service in France.

¹¹Ibid., June 14, 1917.

¹²Ibid., May 3, 1917.

Denmark and Grant Townships displayed their loyalty by over subscribing their Red Cross quotas. Each township in the county had been assessed \$500 as its share. Grant Township sent in \$560; citizens of Denmark having subscribed \$200 of this amount.¹³ The women turned their "afternoon coffees" into knitting "bees", where they knitted articles for the soldiers and rolled bandages for the Red Cross.

Since the World War, death has taken a heavy toll of the early settlers. The obituaries of Peter Anderson, John Anderson, A. Rassmussen, Louis Peter Nelson, and L. Jensen are found in the 1917 to 1920 issues of the newspapers. All of them had been prominent citizens of the Danish settlement. Only two of the first settlers are living today. Christian Christiansen, who lives on the original Christiansen Homestead on Spillman Creek, is nearly eighty-four years old. He was a youth of thirteen at the time of the Indian raid on Spillman Creek, and recalls the flight of the survivors to Junction City and the hardships of the return journey to Lincoln County.¹⁴ He is very active for his age, and has an excellent memory. His sons farm the family homestead, which is entirely free from mortgages, despite the depression, and is well improved for general farming.

¹³Ibid., June 21, 1917.

¹⁴C. Christiansen in an interview with the author, November 12, 1938.

Matts Mattson, who owns a general store in Denmark, is also nearly eighty-four years old, but still assists in the store. He came to Denmark in the early seventies.¹⁵

The depression has left its mark in Lincoln County as it has elsewhere. The economic losses suffered because of low prices have been aggravated by several years of drought, which with the resultant crop failures, have had disastrous results on farm incomes throughout the county. When the farm failed to pay for itself, many of the more ambitious of the young people sought opportunities elsewhere. They may be found in the larger cities of Kansas, in Chicago, or Kansas City. A few of the older citizens became discouraged during the "dust years" (1934-1937) and left the community. The little settlement of Denmark, which had, during the prosperous war years, hoped the day was near when it could incorporate as a town, finally relinquished that dream. In recent years the town lots laid out in 1916 have been petitioned back into farm land.¹⁶ At the present time two general stores, a garage and several filling stations constitute the business district. The church is an excellent and well equipped building for such a small community, and the membership support a large parish house. A two-room elementary school building is adequately

¹⁵ Mr. Mattson does not wish to be quoted on any of the early day events as he does not trust his memory.

¹⁶ Personal letter from Jens B. Nygaard to the author, dated April 9, 1939.

¹⁷ Ibid.

equipped and well arranged. Settlement have been very successful

The exodus from Denmark, particularly that of its youth, has seriously handicapped the social and religious activities of the community. Many of the younger members of the church have found work elsewhere. The present church congregation of 120 members contains the names of few young people in proportion to the number of members who are forty or more years of age.¹⁷ However, those who have left the community have taken with them many of the traditions of their Scandinavian ancestors and are carving out important niches for themselves wherever they may be.

Teaching is still one of the favorite professions of the Danes. Many of them hold important positions in Kansas schools and in other schools all over the nation. Mr. Merville Larson, a native of Denmark, is now head of the forensic department of the Hutchinson, Kansas, Junior College.¹⁸ His students have won honors in state and national contests. He is building up a high standard for the forensic activities of his community.

Another native of Denmark, Miss Mary Anderson, is on the faculty of the Denton, Texas State Teachers College. She has degrees from the Chicago Conservatory of Music, and has studied in Heidelberg. Miss Pearl Anderson is director of music in the Springfield, Illinois public schools.¹⁹

¹⁷Rev. Harold Petersen in personal interview with the author, April 1, 1939.

¹⁸Personal letter from Jens B. Nygaard to the author, dated April 9, 1939.

¹⁹Ibid.

Other members of the settlement have been very successful in the business and commercial world. The Nielson brothers own and operate a business college in Long Beach, California. P. W. Errebo operates one at Miami, Oklahoma. Harry Anderson owned one at Abilene, Kansas for a number of years.²⁰ Harry Larsen is a well known lawyer in Los Angeles, California and Lionel Holm is regional director of resettlement work in Amarillo, Texas.²¹

The above named individuals are examples of the type of trained youth this Scandinavian settlement has contributed to American society. One citizen wrote: "A large percentage of the children of the early settlers in Denmark have had college education and are scattered all over the country doing their work successfully."²² Another made this comment:

We have no movie stars, or things of that nature, or big league ball players. But our people rate high in worth as citizens, patriots, teachers, ministers, lawyers, engineers, and almost every other line of useful activity.²³

Lincoln County has a Scandinavian population of about 600. While it is concentrated in Grant Township, where there are some sixty families with a total of 200 members, Vesper,

²⁰Personal letter from C.C.Nielson to the author, dated April 9, 1939.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Personal letter from Jens B. Nygaard to the author, dated April 9, 1939.

Orange, Battle Creek, and Marion Townships and the city of Lincoln contain many families.²⁴ As they have not settled in groups, it has not been possible to make a special study of each township. The Danish element predominates, but there are many Swedes and Norwegians in the county.

One of the best characterizations of the Scandinavians is that of Senator Capper, who said:

They came here with little. But they have been thrifty, honest, and industrious. Now they are property owners, farmers, school-and-church builders, bank depositors, taxpayers, never tax-dodgers.

In thrift, and in whatever they undertake, they have set us all a most eloquent and striking example of persistent, intelligent endeavor. Their family and religious life is nearly ideal.²⁵

In almost every instance they have adopted American customs, even in the early days they followed the pioneer custom of living in dugouts, because they found them better adapted to the plains conditions than the plank huts they would have built elsewhere.²⁶ They are true Americans today, clinging tenaciously to their civil and religious ideals, their abhorrence of crime, and their belief in law and order.²⁷ They have retained their faith in education and its value,

²⁴Topeka Journal, October 12, 1915.

²⁵Topeka Journal, July 20, 1916, Quotation from speech of Senator Capper at Axtell, Kansas.

²⁶C. Terrence Philblad, "The Kansas Swedes," Social Science Quarterly, XIII (June, 1932), 37.

²⁷Rasmus B. Anderson, "Studies in American Immigration," Chicago Record Herald, clipping, no date.

and have also brought to the new world their knowledge of the value of cooperative enterprises.

The following presentation of them by one of their own number is probably as accurate a summary of their character as could be desired:

To write a picture of the Scandinavians as I know them, it must be a picture of unassuming folk who root firmly to their homes on the land, who live temperately, who succeed fairly well in evaluating the factors that influence men and their lives; who have little desire for fame and publicity.²⁸

While it is true that the Scandinavians have not coveted or won wide publicity, or distinguished themselves in any particular field, they have conformed to the general trend of American life; have accepted its customs and institutions; and have quietly and steadily without any pretense or ostentation lived their lives in the homes they have established by hard work and sacrifice.

²⁸Personal letter from Jens B. Nygaard to the author, dated April 9, 1939.

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- Mr. Larsen, who is a farmer, has lived in the Danish
settlement many years.
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- Mr. Nielson is the son of one of the early settlers.
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APPENDICES

MITCHELL

OSBORNE

Barnard

OTTAWA

Spillman Creek

DENMARK

LINCOLN

VESPER

BEVERLY

SALINE RIVER

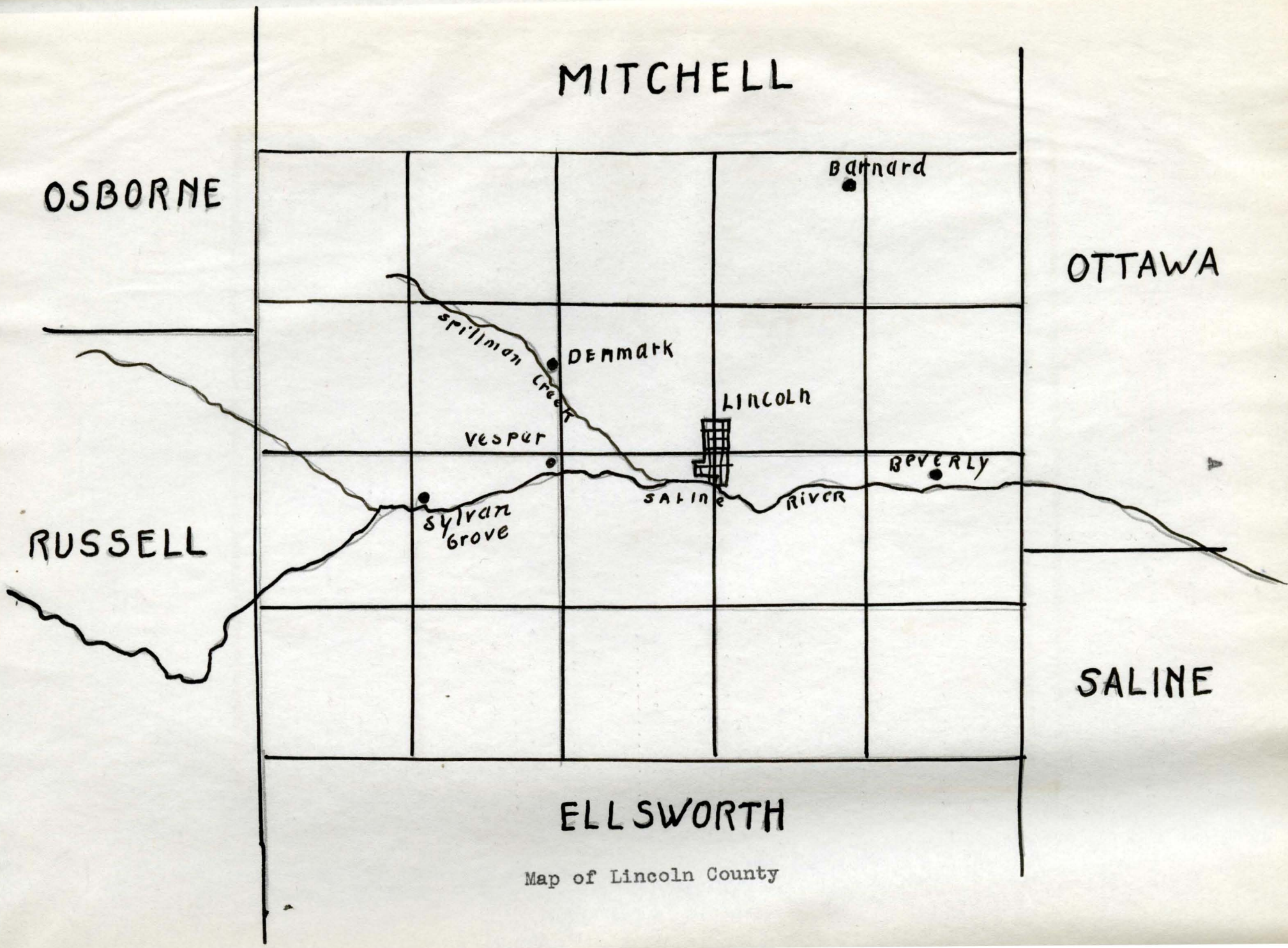
RUSSELL






Sylvan Grove

SALINE

ELLSWORTH










Map of Lincoln County



Cedron	Orange	Battle Creek	Scott	Salt Creek
Hanover	Grant 	Marion	Beaver	Logan
Pleasant 	Vesper	Indiana 	Elk Horn 	Colorado
Highland	Golden Delt	Volley 	Franklin	Madison

LINCOLN COUNTY

Number and location of Scandinavians in each township in Lincoln County in 1875. Each dot represents one Scandinavian.

Cedron	Orange 	Battle Creek "	Scott	Salt Creek "
Hanover	Grant 	Marion 	Beaver 	Logan "
Pleasant .	Vesper 	Indiana 	Elk Horn 	Colorado "
Highland	Golden Belt	Valley 	Franklin 	Madison

LINCOLN COUNTY

Number and location of Scandinavians in each township in Lincoln County in 1895. Each dot represents one Scandinavian.