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WESTBY, WISCONSIN - AN EARLY SOCIAL HISTORY

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ABSTRACT FOR WESTBY, WISCONSIN - AN EARLY SOCIAL HISTORY

In doing this paper, the researcher intended to use historical data gathered on early Coon Prairie and Westby in order to write a narrative account of the community. This material would cover the background to settlement, the process of settlement itself, and significant developments in the social history of the community. Intentions were to cover the years up to the beginning of the twentieth century, however, it became necessary in dealing with certain subjects, such as the histories of local churches and schools, to follow through to logical break-off points rather than stop exactly at 1900.

Methods and procedures used in gathering the data were standard historical research techniques. County histories and Wisconsin histories and atlases containing material dealing with the area were consulted as were all relavant issues of the Wisconsin Magazine of History. Local church histories were used and translated where necessary. Microfilmed copies of back issues of local newspapers were extensively utilized as were available data from such sources as file clippings and pamphlets in the Westby Public Library, Vernon County Museum, Area Research Center at the University of Wisconsin - La Crosse, and the State Historical Society Library in Madison.

The findings of this research are basically that the community which settlers like Even Olson Gullord and Ole T. Westby helped create out of seldom travelled virgin land became an active community with it's own distinct heritage. At the same time Coon Prairie and Westby were frequently a microcosm of the nation as a whole.

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INTRODUCTION

Research involving persons of Norwegian descent creates problems for the student in that varied spellings and alternative names continually appear. There are at least three reasons for these variations and alternative forms. Lona Bergh Jorgenson presented one reason in her compilation of the geneology of the Clemet and Marthe Bergh family:

> Changes often occurred in the spelling of immigrants names after their arrival in the United States. In this case Klemet became Clement. Marte became Marthe and Berg became Bergh. At various times the names of places or farms were used to identify people, and these often became more or less permanent family names. Because of this practice Klemet Klemetson was known variously as Hovde, Offigstad and Berg; the names of farms with which he had connection from early youth until his emigration to America. The last of these, Berg (Bergh) he retained as the family name.[1]

A second reason is the rather well-known Scandinavian custom of changing the surnames of sons with each generation. "For instance, Carl Hover might have a son Thor - surname Hoverson; Thor's son Eric would be Eric Thorson .... and so on."[2] Within the same family one brother might adopt a new surname while another would not. Similarly, one man might assume a farm or place name as the family name while his brother might decline to do so. This custom also helps to explain, for example, why Ole T. Westby's father was named Tosten Olson Westby while Tosten's brother was known as Even Olson Gullord and later simply Even Olson. Daughters usally had their Christian name and their father's surname until their marriages.

Finally, human error frequently accounts for variations in names found in family records. Typographical errors account for some mistakes

of this sort, but many persons were simply poor spellers or became careless or confused when anglicizing Norwegian names. For instance, one of the first members of the Badax County Board from the town of Christiana was recorded in September of 1856 as being "E. Bursett." In November of the same year the "new" member of the board from the town of Christiana was somewhat more correctly recorded as "Engebrit Bjorseth,"[3] very likely the same person. Similarly, in the span of less than half a page, History of Vernon County (1884) refers to an early Christiana settler and innkeeper variously as "Ingebreth Homsted," "Ingebreth Homstad," and "Engebreth Homstad." The name appears on this same pioneer's tombstone in the Old Coon Prairie Cemetery as "Engebreight T. Homstad." Therefore, names in various records such as "Naperud," and "Neprud," or "Kjorkjebo," and "Kjaerkebon," frequently refer to the same family. The extent of the problem for the professional researcher or the casual reader is obvious.

CHAPTER I

VERNON COUNTY BACKGROUNG

Westby, Wisconsin, a town first platted with the coming of the Chicago, Minneapolis and St. Paul Railroad to western Wisconsin in 1879, lies in Vernon County, Situated on what early settlers called Coon Prairie in the township of Christiana, it occupies all of section 33, most of section 28, and portions of section 27 and 34. The town was named after the Norwegian immigrant, Ole T. Westby, who opened a store there in 1869.

Coon Prairie is one of three expanses of rolling woodlands and open land in western Vernon County. The other two are Round Prairie and West Prairie. Coon Prairie is a vaguely defined region extending nearly to the city of Viroqua in the south, the hamlet of Newry in the north, Coon Valley to the west and Bloomingdale and Avalanche to the east. The city of Westby sits approximately in the center of Coon Prairie. The township of Christiana comprises congressional township fourteen north, range four west. It was named for the city of Christiania (now Oslo), Norway which in 1624 was named for it's founder King Christian IV of Denmark - Norway.[4]

Henry Maddin surveyed the township in 1846. The land office at that time in the expanded Crawford County was located in Mineral Point. Consequently, early settlers had to walk or take a wagon to that city to enter their land. On March 2, 1849, the government formed the La Crosse Land District and land acquired after that date in Vernon County was registered in La Crosse.[5]

For a time Christiana was part of the township of Viroqua, but on November 13, 1855, the county board of Badax County created Christiana township. Christiana then was comprised of both the present townships of Christiana and Clinton. By 1857, further board action set aside the town of Clinton so that Christiana completed the boundaries it presently occupies.

American Indians occupied Vernon County along with the rest of Wisconsin at the time of the white man's first arrival. Jean Nicolet noted that the Sioux claimed Wisconsin in 1634 when he encountered Pottawatomies fleeing from them near Green Bay. In 1681, the Sioux took Father Louis Hennepin prisoner for a time near Prairie du Chien, charging him with being a trespasser in their territory.[6] By the early nineteenth century, Sac, Fox, and especially Winnebagoes were the only numerous tribes to be found in Vernon County's part of the state. After the slaughter of the Sac under Black Hawk in Western Vernon County during the Black Hawk War of 1832, the Indian population in the area began to decrease. Following that war whites encountered no serious difficulty with Indians either in Vernon County or in any other part of Wisconsin. "Wisconsin Indians after the Black Hawk War were capable of making off with a settler's pig, but were not given to going about in war-like groups."[7]

In a treaty signed on November 1, 1837 at Washington D. C., the Winnebago Nation ceded all its lands east of the Mississippi River to the United States and agreed to move within eight months to land west of the Mississippi River (Iowa).[8] Most of the Winnebagoes were gone by 1846, but Ole T. Westby's daughter, Emilie, recalled seeing "the tents of the Indians in among the trees where Westby now stands when they had to go to the post office a mile south of Westby in "Old Town."[9]

After untold centuries of American Indian occupation, French explorers and voyageurs arrived in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The first white man to visit what became Vernon County was Michael Accau, sent in 1680 by the French explorer, LaSalle, to explore the Mississippi River north of the Wisconsin River. Antoine Auguel and Father Louis Hennepin accompanied Accau when he first set foot in the western part of the county in May of 1680. In 1766, following the French and Indian War, English explorers led by Jonathan Carver came to the area. In 1805 Zebulon Pike became the first explorer operating under the flag of the United States to visit the future Vernon County.[10]

Congress enacted legislation forming Wisconsin territory in 1836. The site where Westby now stands was part of Crawford County which in turn was within the boundaries of Michilimackinac County to the north. Thus, Crawford County's boundaries extended northward as far as Lake Superior and Canada. In later years succeeding legislative actions created smaller counties out of this large area. With the formation of La Crosse County in 1851 came the creation of Vernon (then Badax) County, carved out of Crawford County. On the third Monday of May, 1851, Badax County came into existence. Officials named it after the Badax River, first called the Canoe River by the French. The name Badax probably came from an anglicizing corruption and mispronounciation of the French word for canoes or boats: bateaux.[11]

According to early sources, residents of Badax County disliked the name and preferred a designation which would appeal to potential settlers moving westward. A woman correspondent to an early issue of Vernon County's first newspaper, Western Times (October, 1856), advocated dubbing the area "Ellen." Alternate suggestions were "Minneshiek," which the local Indians called the river and "Winneshiek," which was the name of a Winnebago chieftain.[12]

Jeremiah Rusk, Vernon County's most illustrious citizen, who became governor of Wisconsin and the nations first full-term Secretary of Agriculture, was instrumental in changing the name of the County to Vernon. As a member of the state legislature, he apparently had tired of being referred to as the "gentleman from Badax." Therefore, when Judge William F. Terhune of Viroqua suggested to Rusk the appellation, Vernon, a name which had the connotation of greenness and association with Washington's Virginia Plantation, the idea caught on. On May 1, 1862, the county became officially known as Vernon.[13]

CHAPTER II

NORWEGIAN SETTLEMENTS IN THE 19TH CENTURY

In the late 1840's Norwegian immigrants along with scattered families of other nationalities were the first settlers on Coon Prairie. Norwegians had been immigrating into the United States sporadically since Cleng Peerson, who had come in advance to New York in 1821, prepared the way for the arrival of fifty-three immigrants aboard the Sloop "Restoration" in 1825. Northern Illinois became a focal point for incoming Norwegians in the late 1830's and early 1840's. By 1850, seventy per cent of Norwegians in the United States lived in Wisconsin. There were then thirty-seven Norwegian settlements in Wisconsin, among them Coon Prairie. Norwegian-born Wisconsin settlers increased from 8,651 in 1850 to 21,442 by 1860.[14]

By the late 1840's the largest and wealthiest Norwegian settlement in the United States was at Koshkonong in Dane County, near present-day Stoughton. This settlement became the temporary gathering point for many Norwegian immigrants while they were deciding where they would make their new homes. Several of Coon Prairie's earliest settlers, including Even Olson Gullord, arrived first at Koshkonong. Gullord was generally credited with being the first to claim land on Coon Prairie.[15]

No nation, except Ireland, has provided the United States with as many immigrants in proportion to its population as Norway. There are a number of reasons why the tide of settlers continued to flow from Norway to America. First, the country is a very mountainous land only

four per cent of which is tillable. In 1845, 80 per cent of the Norwegian people lived in rural areas and were therefore dependent on farming. Second, Norway like many other European nations in the nineteeth century, was still experiencing a rapid population growth which had begun in the eighteenth century. The population of 883,440 in 1801 had nearly tripled by 1905 despite the loss of 500,000 emigrants during the period.[16] A third reason for emigration was the law of primogeniture which allowed only the first born son to inherit his father's property. The rocky soil often would not sustain more than one family per farm, so younger brothers left for a land that promised greater opportunity. Fourth, cheap land was available in the United States. The purchasing price of public domain in 1850 was $1.25 an acre. Even at that low price, the government, anxious for new settlers, did not press for immediate payment.

Two other factors led to emigration. Farmer indebtedness was large and burdensome because of economic depression. Thus the opportunity for the poor small farmer or cotter class to improve his lot by finding a job or purchasing land in America sent him travelling. Finally, the widely-held notion, with much truth in it, that the United States had some of the most productive farmland in the world encouraged Norwegians to leave their native land.[17]

Even O. Gullord, while still at Koshkonong expressed his feelings concerning farmland and work in America in an 1847 letter to his parents and brothers in Norway.

> I'm happy to hear that you're planning on coming to America .... Some people are not happy here, but I'm well satisfied with my new country. I wouldn't go back to Norway even if I were out of debt and owned a large farm there. I owed Peter Bronstad.... (A substantial amount of money). (Bronstad had financed Gullord's voyage and Gullord therefore was put in the position of indentured servanthood). I started working for a

> shoemaker at Koshkonong to work my way out of debt. I got $8 a month for making shoes. Then I surveyed land for Peter Bronstad for about $40. Next I worked for a Yankee (common European expression for any local non-immigrant) for four months at $10 a month. In the fall, I worked one month for $20. I therefore not only bought my freedom from Peter Bronstad but I bought clothes and other things and put aside money as well. You see, I could never have made progress like that in Norway.... As far as land is concerned it's known that America has the most fertile soil in the world. Valley land is very rich and good for raising wheat but even better for corn. Ridge land is better for wheat. Farmers have both kinds of soil for raising bountiful crops of both wheat and corn. Reierson's Pathfinder (a guide book to America then written in Norwegian) is very truthful and can tell you more than I can, so read it....I must sensibly not tell you whether to come or not as it's a serious step, but, for myself I have no regrets. I am happy I came and thousands beside me feel the same.[18]

By the mid 1850's land prices had gone up but Norwegian settlers still regarded American farms as superior to those in Norway. As Svennung O. Kjaerkebon stated in an 1856 letter to relatives in Norway sent from Coon Prairie, "Prices on cultivated land in this vicinity run from $500 to $1,000 for 40 acres. My farm therefore, is worth about $2,000. I owe $100 on it, but I would not trade my property here for any farm in Norway selling for $2,000."[19] Norwegians came especially to settle in Wisconsin in communities like Coon Prairie because "Wisconsin seemed more like their homeland from descriptions than rival land in Illinois, Missouri, and Texas. They were parochial and tended to settle in colonies representing their own districts and dialects in Norway."[20] Norwegians also settled in ethnic communities like Coon Prairie because they feared exploitation by Americans. Even Gullord wrote his family, "when you get to New York, you must ask at the Norwegian Consul's office for the best directions to Wisconsin, otherwise .... (the Yankees) are likely to cheat you."[21] Robert Nesbit quoted Professor Laurence Larson's view on this matter.

> The Yankees were "smart" and the immigrant had a lurking fear that he himself was not smart in the same way. Of course, he was handicapped all around, his ignorance of English put him

> at a disadvantage in all sorts of business transactions. In their resentment, the farmers sought out the traders and businessmen who spoke their own idiom. They felt safe with them. At least they could make them understand what they thought of men whom they suspected of dishonest dealings."[22]

Many of the misunderstandings with "Yankees" of course resulted from language difficulties. Royal C. Bierce, an early editor at Viroqua, told the following anecdote:

> In 1855-56 I was assessing the property of an honest Norwegian farmer in the North part of what is now Christiana. I understood him to tell me he had eighty head of sheep. I wondered where he could keep so many, and asked him several times, but every time I understood him to give the number eighty; so I assessed him for eighty sheep. In the winter when I went to him to collect his tax, he thought it was very high; so he sent for a neighbor, who could talk better English, to come in. The neighbor asked me to read over the man's assessment and everything was satisfactory till I came to the sheep, when I earned that it was eight sheep instead of eighty.[23]

There is a common belief that Norwegians settled in the Coon Prairie area because the coulees or deep valleys reminded them of their native land. But the earliest Coon Prairie settlers specifically chose this location because the land itself was productive and plentiful. A Milwaukee Sentinel reporter said of the region in 1860, "Believe me that with a larger area than either Rock or Walworth Counties, Badax County contains just as good land as lies outdoors in the state of Wisconsin.... There is not a finer region in the world for mixed husbandry."[24]

First Settlers on Coon Prairie

"Before it's settlement.... Coon Prairie was traversed along an inland route called the Black River Road from Prairie du Chien to Black River Falls."[25] This road had been cut by a group of Mormons who had passed that way in 1845. A branch of the road extended into La Crosse County to a ravine known as Mormon Coulee where this religious sect lived for a short time.[26] In 1846 Gullord left the farming community of Biri, about 70 miles

north of modern Oslo, and immigrated to Koshkonong. When he arrived at Coon Prairie in 1848, he found what he had been searching for. Gullord had left Koshkonong in 1847 because the settlement there had become crowded and because many young men were unemployed or working very little. He had intended to go to New Orleans to look for employment but decided instead to remain in Galena, Illinois, where he worked in the lead mines. The following year he went looking for unclaimed land north of Galena. He sought an area large enough to accommodate a fairly large Norwegian settlement. The steamboat on which he was travelling stopped for wood near Stoddard on the Mississippi River at a place called Coon Slough. Gullord left the steamer to look over the land in this region. He walked the entire length of Coon Valley for some twenty miles, without encountering any settlers. He saw many beautiful spots, but none large enough for the size of settlement he had in mind. Therefore, he went on until he came to Coon Prairie which he described as follows:

> It was as beautiful as any land in the Koshkonong area and quiet as the morning of creation.... There was a vast expanse of swaying grass and groves of trees with the most beautiful scenery before him. The future seemed poetic. The silence sang a song over the land.[27]

Had Gullord gone west of the Mississippi instead of remaining to the east, he would have been the first Norwegian settler in Minnesota.[28]

After thanking God for his discovery, Gullord set about staking claims. He chose 160 acres in section five of the town of Viroqua just south of modern Westby. He apparently felt marking the land with his name would be sufficient, and he did not file a claim at the land office in Mineral Point. He then went back to Galena where he worked until the fall. When he returned with some friends to Coon Prairie to settle in September, 1848, he found that a man named George Smith had settled and

claimed the land he had staked out for himself. This same Smith was to become Coon Prairie's first postmaster in 1857. Smith later moved on to Kansas.[29] Gullord did not contest Smith's claim because good land was plentiful, so he settled on new acreage one-half mile north of the ultimate location of the old Coon Prairie church.

Other settlers, mostly Norwegian, soon followed Gullord to Coon Prairie. Typical of the pioneers in the area were Hans Olson (Libakken), Hans K. Larson, Clement Clementson Bergh, and Hoie Oberson Kjorkjebo or Kjaerkebon. Hans Olson (Libakken), who like Gullord, settled in September, 1848, on land claimed in section thirty-five of the town of Christiana. His wife, Caroline, gave birth to the first white child born in Vernon County (March 30, 1850). This child, Brown Olson, later became a state assemblyman from 1891-93 and Vernon County sheriff from 1895 till his death in 1897. Hans K. Larson arrived from Koshkonong in 1849. He claimed land in several sections of the town of Christiana, finally purchasing holdings in two sections. Clement Clementson Bergh came to Coon Prairie on October 1, 1849 and purchased 80 acres on section thirty-five of Christiana township. He became one of the founders of the Coon Prairie church. Hoie Oberson Kjorkjebo or Kjaerkebon left Telemarken, Norway in 1843 at age fifteen and lived in Koshkonong for a time. He worked for six years rafting lumber down the Mississippi River to St. Louis. In 1849, he walked from Koshkonong to La Crosse and from there to Coon Prairie. He settled there for six years until he moved to Coon Valley where he became Coon Valley's most prominent early settler.[30]

Among other pioneers who achieved prominence in Coon Prairie were Ole Syverson, John Michelet, Ole Thorstenson (Tostenson) and Ole T. Westby whose story appears in another section of this paper. Syverson emigrated from Norway in 1849 and settled in section 35 but soon sold his land to John Michelet. He then bought land in section 34 including the 40 acres

where the village of Westby was platted. These 40 acres had originally been purchased by the Lutheran Church from the state with the intention of building a church on them. The land was in use as a cemetery, but by the mid 1850's the Lutherans decided to build what was to become the Coon Prairie Church at it's location southeast of Westby. The church, therefore exchanged the forty acres in Westby for land then belonging to Nels Hanson who then sold it to Jens Johnson who in turn sold it to Syverson. Anton Syverson, Ole's son, held the land in 1879 when the village of Westby was platted.[31]

Michelet arrived in Vernon County from Norway in 1850 where he attended Even Olson Gullord's wedding at Christmas time of that year. He purchased land from Ole Syverson in section 35 but did not settle immediately. He worked as a clerk in Prairie du Chien and at Tibbet's landing. Meanwhile his parents came to Coon Prairie and located on their son's farm. Michelet eventually began farming there and became a county board member for many years serving as it's chairman in 1866. He also became a merchant in Westby in later years.

Thorstenson settled in section thirty of Christiana township in 1849. He was the father of Even Olson Gullord, Henry O. Gullord (Gulord) and Tosten Olson Westby (Ole T. Westby's father). These last two sons accompanied him to America. Born in Norway in 1785, he was sixty-three years of age when he migrated. He died a few years after his arrival at Coon Prairie. Henry O. Gullord farmed his father's land after his death.[32]

Life of the Coon Prairie Settler

Even Gullord suggested that in Coon Prairie he had found the promised land. However, for every favorable aspect of starting a new life for the Norwegian immigrant, there were two or more unfavorable ones. The journey

by ship from Norway was dangerous, difficult, and uncomfortable. The earliest immigrants from Stavenger, Norway, paid forty-two dollars each for passage to Boston. They then traveled by boat or wagon to New York where they took a steamer up the Hudson River to Albany, from there by the Erie Canal to Buffalo. "It took three weeks from Buffalo to Milwaukee in a miserable vessel that leaked like a sieve and could scarcely hold together."[33] At Milwaukee immigrant Norwegians were met by friends or relatives who took them by wagon to Koshkonong. They would continue on to Coon Prairie by foot or wagon.

As time went on the methods and routes of transport changed somewhat for the Norwegian settlers. The methods may have differed, but the hardships remained. New York or Quebec became the east coast destinations for Norwegian newcomers. Gullord wrote his family:

> Don't go on steel-hulled ships (steamers). Go on sailing vessels instead. Steel ship passengers suffer a lot. First go to Le Havre in France and catch a large American ship there (clipper). The fare may be more expensive but its worth it for such a long trip. As for provisions take flat bread, if sealed in a tight container it will last well. Take dry meal and grain and oven dried bread. Anything with moisture in it will soon spoil. Take dried beef and butter and strong cheese ... Don't bring any tools as they are of better quality here in the United States. Do however, bring a spinning wheel, weaving frames and a wool carder in order that you may make your own clothes. Make some small chests to easily carry your goods.[34]

Svennung Kjaerkebon also counseled his relatives in an 1866 letter to Norway. (Rail travel by then was possible to La Crosse).

> Take a sailing vessel. It is so much cheaper for one with a family. Try to get away early in the spring. Then the wind will be favorable for a faster crossing and you can miss the summer heat that way as well as you're crossing the continent. You also can get here early enough in the summer to find work in the harvest and therefore make provisions better for the winter. If you can choose, go directly by rail from Quebec to La Crosse.[35]

He had also suggested in an 1856 letter to "bring dyed homespun cloth in the bolt and sell your silver jewelry and buy table silver."[36]

One immigrant family to the Coon Prairie area met with tragedy and disaster in Quebec. In 1857, Peder and Anne Pederson (Flugstad) were detained at Quebec for three weeks with the sickness and eventual death of their young son from typhoid fever.

> When about to board the ship at Quebec, the father discovered that he had forgotten something at the hotel. While he was gone to get that, the ship left port, leaving the Flugstad family behind. While the family was still standing on the pier, the ship was seen to catch fire and burned, and only one child was saved of the passengers.[37]

Arrival at their settlement did not terminate all difficulties. John Bergum left Norway in April of 1849 with his wife Nellie and two daughters. They did not reach their temporary home in Koshkonong until after five and one half months of continuous travel. His family remained there with friends while he traveled 200 miles north to find winter work in the lumber camps. Winter employment in the pineries near Black River Falls was common for early Coon Prairie men. He earned $100 there but came back with only a few dollars because his employers had not paid him. On the return trip to Koshkonong he passed through Coon Prairie and decided to settle there. At Koshkonong he purchased a yoke of oxen and two cows and with a sick wife and three small children made the arduous trek of more than 100 miles to Coon Prairie. His daughter, Elizabeth, later became the wife of Jeremiah Rusk.[38]

Life for the early settlers became almost unbearable at those times when the weather turned against them and when disease of epidemic proportions raged among them. For example, a hard frost in late June of 1854 killed the newly planted crops, and left the trees bare of leaves. The settlers therefore, were forced to live on the only surviving crop, deep-planted

potatoes, the following winter.[39] In January, 1859, the temperature in the area remained at thirty-six degrees below zero for nearly a week. "One feels nothing now but the cold and as for feeling it more keenly than we have since last Thursday night, why it is physically impossible."[40] An epidemic, perhaps diptheria, struck Coon Prairie shortly after the Civil War. In the span of a few weeks 194 people died. Half of the victims were under five years old and twenty-two of them were babies under one month."[41]

Most of the life of the Coon Prairie pioneer was filled with day to day hard work. Campbell's description of the Koshkonong settlement, probably gives a reasonably accurate idea of what the earliest Coon Prairie life was like.

> The houses were log cabins, shanties and dugouts. Men and women alike dressed in blue drilling or in coarse homespun, brought over from the old country in large, bright painted chests. Not a woman.... possessed a hat. Most wore old country kerchiefs, a few homemade sunbonnets. Carpets, kerosene lamps, reapers, threshing machines were things not dreamed of. If books were few, a family Bible and some of Luthers writings were rarely wanting even in the humblest homes. People were well grounded in catechism, the folklaring and Bible History. The people ate .... flatbread and mylsa, and prim and bresta, the kind of food on which a hundred generations of Norway seamen and mountaineers had been raised.[42]

An early land owner on Coon Prairie described his visit to Norwegian settlers. He wrote, "there was a thriving settlement of Norwegian farmers on Coon Prairie, with whom we ate bread and milk from wooden bowls with hand carved wooden spoons one hundred years old."[43]

The early cabins built on Coon Prairie were generally twelve feet square made of split logs. Boards or planks were unobtainable luxury items for most people. There were no iron nails and either wooden pegs or notches helped to hold the logs together. Coon Prairie pioneers filled cracks in the walls with moss, tree splinters or clay. The floors of the cabins were bare ground.[44] With few exceptions, the earliest settlers

ate what they could grow, catch or hunt. Nearby Skogdalen (Timber Coulee) provided deer, bear, wildcat and coon and had streams reportedly so full of fish that the pioneers could dip into the water with a pail and come up with trout two feet long. The bears in the area sometimes presented peculiar problems to settlers as the following liberal translation of a (tall?) tale from Holand's Book, Coon Prairie describes:

> A woman noticed an animal after her only pig. So she grabbed a nearby oak root and hit the animal with it. It then reared up and dropped the pig and she could see it was a bear. She then drove a pitch fork into the side of the bear and it ran off into the woods. The pig, so panic stricken by what had happened, followed the bear into the woods and was never seen again.[45]

For the earliest settlers, commercial food items such as coffee, syrup, salt and meal, and such items as clothing were obtainable no closer than Prairie du Chien, a round-trip journey of over 100 miles. The settlers who made the trip might walk, carrying a sack of meal back on their shoulders. While there, some also took the time to visit local taverns because there were few opportunities on Coon Prairie to obtain alcoholic beverages. Sometimes while going to Prairie du Chien they would drive a yoke of oxen and would take the better part of a week for the trip. When planning a journey, Coon Prairie settlers would usually inform their neighbors in order that shopping might be done for the entire group. The number of trips for necessary supplies was reduced in this way.[46]

Hans Nelson, an early settler, recalled a particular incident regarding the journey:

> I remember T. Unseth went to Prairie du Chien in 1849 to buy flour and other necessaries to life; but unfortunately the storekeeper made a grand mistake and loaded up a barrel of white sugar instead of flour. When Mr. Unseth got home his daughter at once climbed up into her fathers wagon to open the supposed flour barrel, the family being entirely out of any kind of bread stuff at the time. But upon her taking out the head of the barrel, what was the surprise at finding the contents to be white sugar, instead of flour. Imagine the situation! No flour in the

house. White sugar, however good in its place, could not make bread. The woman then began to cry as she thought of their condition - fifty miles away from a mill and not a morsel of bread to eat.

What was to be done? The only way was to thresh some grain out of the stalk. And how was this to be done, unaided by machines? Why they simply made a round ring 24 feet across on the ground and let the oxen tread it out in the good old fashion way! And after threshing came the grinding. This was not by the modern "roller process" but by turning an "old country" coffee mill.

There were many of the settlers of that year who lived on salt and potatoes....[47]

By the early 1850's stores and mills were opened in La Crosse, and Coon Prairie settlers could make the twenty-five mile journey there instead. The trip to La Crosse presented problems to travelers because of the steep hills. Drivers, therefore, carried the contents of their wagons uphill by hand so that the teams of oxen or horses could make the ascent.[48]

By the mid-1850's stores were opened in Viroqua and at "Old Town," about a half-mile south of modern Westby. Future Governor Jeremiah Rusk had a partnership with a W. Larson in a dry goods and grocery store at Coon Prairie. In 1856 in the Western Times they advertized: "We will sell as cheap as can be bought at Viroqua."[49] Prices some goods brought on the Viroqua market in 1859 are as follows:

Flour $2.00 to $2.25 per hundred lbs.
Corn 40¢ a bushel
Oats 30-35¢ a bushel
Brown Sugar 12½¢ a bushel
Salt $4.50 a barrel
Wheat 60-65¢ a bushel[50]

Water supplies for farmers on the prairie were often quite limited. At first there was no well digging, so many settlers traveled for miles for water. Gullies and other low areas were dammed up to trap water, but this kind of stored water quickly became undrinkable.[51] Emilie Westby remembered digging down a few feet to find springs of running water. "They would build a wall and we would have what we called a 'brynd' or well. Most people had a 'vandsele' (leterally 'water harness') to carry their water with."[52]

The isolation of the early Coon Prairie farmers also brought hardships. But by the mid 1850's, a post office was opened at "Old Town," and mail and newspapers were therefore made available to the settlers. There was no Coon Prairie newspaper until 1900 when Frank Haines first published the Westby Times. However, for those Coon Prairie settlers who read English, Vernon County's first newspaper, the Northwestern Times, became available in Viroqua in 1856. The Times was followed by the Viroqua Expositor in 1858 and other papers later on.[53]

Medical care for the Coon Prairie settlers was provided by Dr. J. L. Walloe, a Norwegian physician who lived about two miles south of present Westby and by such men as Dr. E. W. Tinker of Viroqua. In an advertisement in the Viroqua Expositor, Tinker publicized the following information: "I charge one dollar for the first mile and 50¢ for each additional mile. Fifty per cent additional charges for visits after 9 o'clock p.m. and before 5 o'clock a.m. Settlements to be made in May and November of each year."[54]

Although times were hard and goods and services were often difficult to obtain, there were many positive aspects to pioneer life. According to an early source, "a cordial feeling pervaded the little settlements. The settlers were always ready to assist each other. The 'latch string' was always outside the cabin door and hospitality was characteristic of all."[55]

CHAPTER III

CIVIL WAR

In Vernon County as in much of the United States, recovery from the "panic" or depression of 1857 had not yet occurred by the time the Civil War began in 1861. Both patriotic fervor and probably the "hard times," led many young men from Christiana township to volunteer for Civil War service. The 1860 census showed 11,007 people inhabiting Badax (Vernon) County. By September of 1862 there were 2,453 men enrolled in the militia in Vernon County. Of these 163 were from the town of Christiana. At least 33 Christiana residents as well as other Coon Prairie soldiers saw Civil War duty. Nine died of disease or wounds (See Table I). Coon Prairie men served in such fighting units as Company I of the Sixth Wisconsin Regiment which was part of General Rufus King's famous "Iron Brigade" and Company C of the Eighteenth Regiment known as the "Badax Tigers." Other units in which Coon Prairie men served were the Third Infantry, Fifteenth Infantry, Seventeenth Infantry, Twenty-fifth Infantry, Fiftieth Infantry, and the Fifty-third Infantry Regiments."[56]

Part of the Army of the Potomac, the "Iron Brigade" consisted of the Second Regiment (which suffered the highest percentage of losses of any regiment in the Union Army), the Sixth and Seventh Wisconsin Regiments, and the Nineteeth Indiana Regiment. The Brigade was under the command of General Rufus King, a longtime Wisconsin editor, and Brigadier General John Gibbon both of whom were West Point graduates. In the Battle of

Gainesville, Virginia fought on August 28, 1862 the brigade lost 800 killed and wounded out of 2,200 troops. At the Battle of South Mountain, Maryland on September 14, 1862, the unit probably earned it's nickname of the "Iron Brigade." The men in the brigade had charged up a mountain in the face of Confederate troops. This action was witnessed by General Joseph Hooker and General George B. McClellan, Commander of the Army of the Potomac. McClellan asked, "Whose troops are those?" as he saw the charge. Hooker told him and McClellan is reported to have replied, "They are men of Iron." McClellan later commended the brigade in a letter as being "equal to the best troops in any army in the world"[57] The Iron Brigade took part in the Battle of Antietam and the Battle of Fredericksburg in which the unit was under fire for two days. The Iron Brigade participated in General Ambrose Burnside's "Mud March" in 1863 and made an outstanding charge in pontoon boats across the Rappahannock River in April, 1863.

The Iron Brigade also took active part in the Battle of Gettysburg which began July 1, 1863 and claims the distinction of being the first to begin the infantry fighting there. At Gettysburg the brigade witnessed Pickett's famous charge through the wheat field and later took part in the pursuit of the Confederates back into Virginia. At Gettysburg more than one third of the brigade's men were killed or wounded.

After a furlough of thirty days in which the men went back to Wisconsin and Indiana, the Iron Brigade took part in the Wilderness Campaign in Virginia in May of 1864. It also fought at Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, the Siege of Petersburg and was present at Appomattox at the war's end. In the Battle of the Wilderness, Company I of the Sixth Regiment, which consisted partly of Coon Prairie men, lost thirteen soldiers killed in action. During the course of the Civil War 163 men of the Sixth Wisconsin Regiment were killed in action, 71 of whom died of their wounds and 84 who died of disease.[58]

Company "C" of the Eighteenth Infantry Regiment, sometimes called the "Badax Tigers" was poorly drilled and poorly armed when it left Milwaukee on March 30, 1862. Nevertheless it was in the thick of the Battle of Shiloh just six days later. At Shiloh the Eighteenth Infantry sustained twenty-five men killed in action and ninety-one wounded. The unit went on to fight in the Battle of Corinth and the siege and battle of Vicksburg. The Eighteenth took part in the Chattanooga campaign and fought off superior numbers of Confederate troops at Alstoona Pass, Alabama. They later came under General William T. Sherman's command at Raleigh, North Carolina.[59]

The Third Wisconsin Infantry Regiment took part in the Battles of Winchester, Cedar Mountain, Second Battle of Bull Run, Antietam, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. They served with Sherman from Chattanooga to Atlanta and participated in the "March to the Sea." The Thirteeth Wisconsin Regiment's participation in the Civil War consisted mostly of guard duty, long marches and garrison duty. The Fifteenth Regiment, known as the "Fighting Fifteenth," was made up almost totally of Wisconsin Scandinavians under the former state prison commissioner, Colonel Hans C. Heg. Ole T. Westby was a member of this unit (See below). The Fifteenth took part in the Battle of Island No. 10, Stone River, in which it lost twenty-five killed and sixty wounded, and Chickamauga where Heg was killed and fifty-eight of his men taken prisoner. The regiment went from Chattanooga to Atlanta with General Sherman and returned for guard duty in Chattanooga while Sherman marched to the coast.

There were a number of remaining units in which Coon Prairie men served. The Seventeenth Wisconsin Regiment, made up mostly of men of Irish descent, fought at Pittsburgh Landing and Vicksburg where fourteen men were killed and fifty wounded. The Seventeenth later accompanied Sherman from Chattanooga

to the sea. The Twenty-fifth Wisconsin Regiment after gaining experience in the Indian Campaign in Minnesota in 1862 joined General U. S. Grant's Army at Vicksburg in 1863 and served with Sherman from Chattanooga through his march to the coast. Future Governor Jeremiah M. Rusk was in this regiment. The Fiftieth and Fifty-third Wisconsin Regiments, which were among twelve regiments organized in 1864, served guard and garrison duty until the war's end in the spring of 1865.[60]

CHAPTER IV

OLE T. WESTBY

Ole T. Westby, who enlisted on December 24, 1861 described his Civil War record as follows:

> (I) first entered service at Madison to serve as a private in Co. H 15th Regt. Wisconsin Volunteer Inf., but was detailed to serve in ordinance a part of the time and in the band. (I) was leader of the band when discharged at Nashville, Tenn., Feb. 13, 1865 at the expiration of my term of service. The first battle (I) engaged in was Union City, Tennessee. Then came Island no. 10, Nashville Tenn., Murfreesboro, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, Missionary Ridge, Blue Ridge, Resaca, Ga., Kenesaw Mt., Ga., PeachTree Creek, Atlanta Ga., Jonesboro and Lovejoys Station Ga.
>
> I was wounded in the right arm at battle of Lovejoys Station. I was in hospital at Chattanooga in 1863 a short time. My intimate comrads [sic] in the service were Ole Johnson, Knut Johnson, Knud Knudson and Lars Bherg [sic] [61]

General Earl Rogers who edited Memoirs of Vernon County wrote that Ole T. Westby was one of two unarmed orderlies who accompanied Colonel (Hans C.) Heg when they overpowered two armed Confererate pickets.[62]

Westby was born in Toten, Norway on May 2, 1840, the son of Tosten and Bertha (Galstad) Westby. He came to America in 1849 with his parents, a sister, Rigene, and a brother Even. He lived with his uncle Even Olson Gullord while his father worked in lumber camps along the Kickapoo River to the east. In 1850 Tosten Westby settled 160 acres in section thirty-four southeast of Westby and remained there till his death in 1871.

In November of 1865, about nine months after his discharge from the Union Army, Ole Westby, then twenty-five, married seventeen year old Sarah Dahl, the sister of Andrew Dahl who became one of Westby's most illustrious residents in later years. Westby and his wife had eleven children, eight of whom were still living when he died in 1898.[63]

After his discharge from the army, Westby purchased eighty acres of his father's farm and worked it until 1869.[64] In that year he bought some land where the city of Westby now stands and built a combination store and home. He hauled the lumber for the building by wagon all the way from Black River Falls (fifty miles). His daughter recalled that it was "a fine home compared to the little log cabin they'd lived in before." He built a separate house in 1872 and in 1874 he erected a larger store across from the old one. It stood "across from the Westby State Bank." The goods sold in the store came by wagon from Sparta and La Crosse. His daugher wrote, "one of father's day books for 1876 shows he sold goods for $16,315.64 that year. An average of $52.45 a day (not counting store closings). Those days he bought grain, wool, butchered hogs, eggs, butter and anything the farmers had to sell."[65] Westby continued to operate his store until the late 1890's. He died of a throat malignancy on January 7, 1898. His son-in-law, Otto Galstad, assumed operation of the business and continued to sell "groceries and china." The store was eventually torn down in the 1920's.[66]

Life during the 1870's was described by Mrs. Emilie Westby Nustad this way:

> The only excitement those days was when the stage came through from Sparta to Viroqua with passengers and mail going south one day and north the next. Often passengers from Norway would come. They would almost always get off, happy to find someone who could talk Norwegian. Those days some party here in the United States would buy the tickets for them and send them to Norway, and the one using the ticket would sometimes have to work a whole year for it. My father helped a good many over, but he would wait until they had enough money to pay him back.
>
> Another interesting day for children was when the agent came with his enclosed wagon with drawers and doors all around. He sold notions, dry goods like overalls, stockings, calico and some groceries, but what the children liked best was the striped stick candy, colored gumdrops and spruce gum.
>
> When there was a wedding a man (called Kjøgemester) would go around and invite the people. He would also receive the guest

and be the general overseer at the wedding. It was usually an all day and all night celebration....

For presents the guests would bring roll lefse, Norwegian cakes and dressed chickens (store bought items were not easily obtained).

For funerals they would invite their friends only. One reason was that their homes were not so large and they had to invite all for dinner, as they all had so far to go.

When I was twelve years old, (about 1878) we had a Fourth of July Celebration....on Birch Hill (southwest of Westby). There was a crude merry go round pulled by a horse, running races and contests....speeches, refreshments, and organ music....[67]

CHAPTER V

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Railroad and Growth

The railroad stimulated development in Westby just as it did in much of the rural United States during this era. In 1878 Judge William F. Terhune of Viroqua observed, "The great hindrance to a more rapid development of this county has been and is the want of railroad facilities.... The present mode of communication with the outer world is by stage lines centered at Viroqua."[68] The railroad was not long in coming. By November of 1878, track laying for a spur line of the Chicago, Minneapolis and St. Paul Railroad (C.M. and St. P.) from Sparta to Viroqua began. On August 13, 1879 the first regular train of cars rolled through Westby. By surveying and platting the town, the C.M. and St. P. Railroad provided an additional service to Westby. On August 14, 1879, the station was opened and the town christened by assistant Division Superintendant of the C.M. and St. P., A. J. Earling. It was named, of course, for Ole T. Westby.[69]

The building of the railroad created a flurry of activity in the area. Westby's daughter, Emilie, recalled:

> There were about 70 men working on (the railroad) and all boarded with us. Mother would bake twenty-four or more loaves of bread each day and ten to twelve pies each day; get up a 4 o'clock in the morning to fill all those dinner pails for the men....our men were kept busy butchering and hauling water from the clockmaker spring (east of town) our cisterns were not enough.[70]

By August 21, 1879 trains started running to Viroqua and by November of 1880 the Vernon County censor reported, "The number of hogs and railroad ties marketed here (Viroqua) is simply amazing. 50,000 ties and 500 carloads of wood are wanted to be delivered at the depot."[71]

The railroad had a similar affect on the economy in Westby as Emilie Westby recalled.

> In the winter we would see a long stream of teams with loads of ties coming into town, mostly from Kickapoo. Ties were piled all along the track. This business was a great help for the pioneers of the Kickapoo Valley.
>
> When the railroad came through there was a boom here - three stores, two grain warehouses, one hotel and several dwellings were built within a short time, also a lumber yard and a blacksmith shop.[72]

The town began to grow rapidly. In July of 1883 the Westby Business Directory included the following merchants: Hanson and Son, General Merchants, C. H. Ballsrud,E. C. Bergh and Thoreson and Co., Lumber Dealers; John Michelet and W. E. Coats and Co., Grain Dealers; E. C. Bergh, Hotel; Jens Skaugstad, Harness Maker; J. J. Lindahl, Tin Shop; Miss Ballsrud and Josephine Michelet, Milliners; Theodore Thoreson and Anton Syverson, Furniture Dealers; B. Hanson and A. Peterson, Shoemakers; and Charles Thorson, Foundry and Machine Shop.[73]

In addition to this dozen places of business in 1883, Westby expanded to include nearly four times that number by the end of the century. In 1899, in an article commemorating Westby's first two decades, The Viroqua Republican declared, "In twenty years it grew from three or four business enterprises to over forty and from fifty inhabitants to about 700." (Actually the census of 1900 showed a population figure of 524). Westby became incorporated as a village in 1895 as seventy-three out of ninety-six voters approved the move in a special ballot taken on January twenty-first of that year. On July 1, 1920 a charter was granted giving Westby the status of a city.[74]

Agricultural Growth

The early farmers on Coon Prairie cleared the land of burned or diseased stumps by using six or seven pairs of oxen hitched to a plow. Cleared land, of course, brought a higher price than the $1.25 an acre for

virgin land. After the Civil War, Svennung Kjaerkebon wrote, "property now, after the war, is higher priced as is everything - tilled land, fenced and plowed without houses costs $15 an acre. Wholly untilled land is much cheaper, for example two, three, four or five dollars an acre."[75] In 1856 Kjaerkebon wrote to relatives in Norway concerning his harvest:

> We had but a middling year. I had 20 acres to harvest this year which yielded 275 bushels of wheat, 135 bushels of oats, 18 bushels of barley, 30 bushels of maize corn, 50 bushels of potatoes besides a lot of garden vegetables.
>
> Prices I received per bushel were wheat 1 dollar, oats, 50¢ potatoes 50¢. So my crop outside of what is to be kept for seed and household use yielded me $200 this year.
>
> .... Prices of stock: horse $100 to $200, a yoke of oxen $100 to $150, a cow $25 to $35, a sheep $2 to $3. I bought an old wagon for $27 and .... a plow for $4....[76]

In 1856 he wrote that servant girls get "five dollars to ten dollars per month with much pleasant work." In 1866 he mentioned "wages for simple labor are from 75¢ to one dollar a day."[77]

An advertisement in a Viroqua paper of 1868 read, "H. Greene wants 300 girls to pick hops in Sparta. Pays stage fare both ways and will furnish hall every night for them to dance."[78] Good hops then brought about forty cents a pound and according to an 1878 atlas, crop production in acres in Vernon County that year was wheat-49,080, oats-22,463, corn-17,045, and barley-3,370. The major crops in the area during those early years, therefore were largely grain. It was not until after the turn of the twentieth century that the dairy industry became dominant in the area, but by the 1890's railroad ties, (see section on railroads) and tobacco had become front-running commodities.[79] In the 1870's Hans Storsveen raised the first tobacco in the Westby area. "He moved here from Dane County where they raised it. So he got the neighbors interested."[80] Tobacco sold for four to ten cents a pound in 1877. It first appeared as an item of transportation in the county in 1871 when the Prairie Du Chien division of the St. Paul

R. R. shipped 1,373,650 pounds eastward.[81] According to the tax assessor, E. V. Homstad, the town of Christiana raised 40,400 pounds of tobacco in 1896. Furthermore, an article in the Viroqua Republican in February, 1897 mentioned that "two tobacco warehouses in Westby at this time employ 40 men each and pay to the men $250.00 per week per warehouse, therefore $500.00." The article continued, "tobacco business is truly a great business in Vernon County and Westby reaps her share of the business."[82]

In an era when labor unrest was common, "Westby's tobacco industry reflected the national scene, as on February 28, 1898, a walkout of tobacco sorters occurred. In an article containing biased wording, faulty logic and obvious editorializing, the editor of the Viroqua Republican explained:

> Last Monday, about 4 p.m. occurred a genuine strike in Westby. About sixty tobacco sorters in the warehouse of H. M. Bekkedal. They demanded a raise of fifteen cents per hundred for sorting and being refused their demand, they quietly walked out. They visited the warehouses of Charles Shannon and S. S. Neprud and finally persuaded the men in Neprud's warehouse to quit. The men in Shannon's were bound to stick to their work, but they were molested and bothered so that they finally had to quit. The strikers then held a meeting in the hall. After their meeting, they paraded the streets for an hour or so with bits of red ribbon in their hats and then finally deposed [sic] for the night.
>
> The warehouse men had determined to hold out and did so until the report came that the workers at Viroqua had received a raise and being fair minded men and believing in paying as much as other houses do they finally gave in.
>
> At last report all men were back at work. The warehouse has been paying them ten to fifteen cents more here for sorting than in any other place in Wisconsin. They thought the men ought to be satisfied. There is strong talk by proprietors of hiring women to do their sorting next season. This will be a lesson to some of the strikers we are thinking.[83]

The town survived the "genuine strike," but the following winter the Republican reported that one of the proprietors had carried out his threat to hire women workers instead of men. "Shannon's help now is thirty-five of which twenty-five are girls and he says he will have forty-five girls at work by next Monday."[84] The same issue of the Republican mentioned that around 200 people were employed at the Westby tobacco

warehouses that winter. By 1900 there were five tobacco warehouses in Westby employing 270 people. "The sizers handle about 170 lbs. each of tobacco a day. 240,000 lbs. per week totally. At 70¢ per hundred it gives the sizers a total payroll of $1,980 weekly. Add this to $360 of other help and there is a $2,040 weekly tobacco payroll."[85]

CHAPTER VI

EFFECT OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Churches - A Continuous influence

From the time of early settlement, churches played a continuously significant role in the history of the area. In 1850, there were approximately 20,000 Norwegians living in America and only seven Norwegian Lutheran pastors to serve them. Not until June 22, 1851, did a Lutheran pastor, Reverand C. L. Clausen, visit the isolated Coon Prairie settlement. He held services and baptized seven children in Even Olson Gullord's barn. Other early services were held in the Hans Neprud's house.[86]

On his second visit Pastor Nels Brandt on July 12, 1853 organized the Coon Prairie Lutheran Church. The first pastor of the church was Reverand H. A. Stub, who assumed his duties in July of 1855. The first Coon Prairie Church built in 1856-57 on the site where the present country church stands, required financing by local money lenders who charged 20 per cent interest on the $4,200 it cost to build this 55 x 22 feet frame building.[87] Though dedicated in 1858 Pastor Stub held services as early as the summer of 1856 making it the "first church built by Norwegians in Western Wisconsin, and the first church of any kind in Vernon County."[88] J. A. Somerby, editor of the Western Times attended one of the early services in August, 1856 and included the following statements among his comments on the service:

> The service and preaching were in the Norse language.... The form of worship seems to be German Lutheran liturgy.... The preacher was dressed in a long black surplice with a ruff collar.... (as in Elizabethan England). There seemed to be an earnest spirit of devotion in the assemblage.... of 150.[89]

The early Coon Prairie church was beset with the same financial difficulties which the rest of the nation faced in the 1857 "panic." Hjalmer Holand described a problem one early settler had who could not raise the seventy-five cents necessary to pay for his land claim. "....He asked Pastor Stub for seventy-five cents and Pastor Stub did not have it either because he was paid usually in produce. Stub said, 'Wait till the upcoming Easter service and maybe I will get enough money from the collection.' But he did not."[90]

The fortunes of the church took an upturn and as the times improved the Norwegian Lutherans held their synodical meeting at the Coon Prairie Church in 1859.

Controversy developed, as it did in the Norwegian Synod nationally. In 1857, disagreement arose within the heirarchy of the church over the issue of slavery. The synod had accepted the chance to use the training facilities of the Missouri Synod Lutherans in St. Louis. A Norwegian Lutheran faculty member there agreed with his colleagues that "slavery in itself was not a sin."[91] Division within the Norwegian synod resulted over this position. The furor died down with the coming of the Civil War in 1861. In 1868, however, three years after the Civil War ended, the Norwegian Lutheran synod "passed a resolution that (the Missouri synod doctrine was right and that) slavery in itself was not wrong - the wrong lies in its abuse."[92] The controversy erupted anew as northern congregations, who had sent sons and husbands to fight and die in a war fought partly to end slavery, resented this reactionary stand. Some congregations left the synod while many others considered doing so. At Coon Prairie, a committee drew up a formal position statement on it's views on slavery. After some degree of hedging by the committee, Clemet Berg proposed the

following resolution: "Where one man by force, makes another man a slave against his will, and pays nothing for his labor, there is absolute sin." This resolution was adopted unanimously along with the following amendment suggested by Dr. Walloe. "Slavery is sin without exception among Christian and civilized people." In 1869 the synod withdrew its controversial slavery position.[93]

By 1872 the congregation obtained two new pastors who served many surrounding smaller congregations as well. Pastor H. C. Preus arrived in 1863 and Pastor Halvor Halvorsen replaced Preus in 1872 and served the Coon Prairie Congregation for over forty-nine years until his death in Norway in 1921. By the time he died, Pastor Halvorsen had conducted funeral services for more than 1050 members of the congregation. On September 15, 1895, on Pastor Halvorsen's fiftieth birthday, the Coon Prairie Congregation gave what up to that time was "undoubtedly the largest surprise party ever held in the county." The pastor returned home from preaching in Viroqua to find the band playing on his lawn and hundreds there to congratulate him. He received as gifts "a span of fine coach horses, a set of double harness and a Racine Surrey the cash value of which amounted to $260.[94]

Construction on what became known as the "Big Stone Church" began in 1875. It was in use by 1878 although it was not dedicated until 1884. On Easter Sunday of 1909, lightning struck the church, and it burned down from the resulting fire. The congregation decided to rebuild immediately, and began construction on a $15,000 church in the country as well as a $21,000 church in town. The church in town, known as Westby Coon Prairie Church, is still in use today. It had one of the first pipe organs in the nation purchased at a cost of $2,100. A crowd estimated at 2,500 people gathered in Westby for the dedication.[95]

Our Savior's Lutheran Church grew out of the controversy within the broader religious community over the doctrine of predestination. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century this dissension "permanently split the Ohio Synod from the Missouri Synod, alienated from the Missouri the main body of Norwegian Lutherans, ... and deepened the breach between Missouri and Iowa."[96]

In Westby, by 1888, the congregation of the Coon Prairie Church, like many Lutheran groups throughout the United States, was split into two camps; "Missourians" and "anti Missourians." The two sides agreed on the concept that the individual who believes in Christ and atones for his sins is destined for eternal salvation. The differences between the groups centered on the issue of cause or effect as well as over a matter of interpretation of scripture. The "Missourians" felt a man cannot believe in Christ unless God causes him to do so. On the other hand, the "anti-Missourians" felt that God chooses a person for salvation on the basis of whether he believes in Christ or not. The "Missourians" said that nowhere in scripture does it specifically state that man is saved "in view of his faith." The "anti-Missourians" countered this argument with: "If one takes the Lutheran teachings .... and the scriptures as a whole .... (it) is clear that God elects man to salvation in view of the faith he foresees in the man."[97]

On Coon Prairie the sides seemed irreconcilable as Pastor Halvorsen, a staunch "Missourian," frequently chastized the "anti-Missourians" for what he felt was belief in a false doctrine. Most of the congregation seemed to side with their pastor. Consequently, the "anti-Missourians" felt they had no recourse but to leave the congregation. During the course of the year of 1888 about fifty families withdrew from the Coon Prairie Church.

Some of these people were without a church for a time, but they began to meet at the Smith Schoolhouse south of Westby and led by such men as Lars Andreas, Søren Larson, Lars Larson, and Andrew Ekern they secured a number of ministers on a temporary basis. On November 9, 1888, the fifty dissenting families, other unaffiliated families, and a number of families from the West Coon Prairie Congregation, with the aid of Pastor J. N. Kildahl, formed Our Savior's Lutheran Church. They agreed to build a 64 x 32 foot church in Westby for $2,086. Until the church was built, services were held in the Temperance Hall and the Westby Methodist Church.[98]

A union of Our Savior's and St. Petri congregations occurred in July, 1889. St. Petri just north of Westby was organized in 1868 and had built a church on the grounds of the present cemetery of Our Savior's. With the union of the congregations in 1889, St. Petri's as an identifiable unit ceased to exist. The first minister the new congregation was able to acquire on a full time basis was Pastor C. M. Nodtvedt who accepted a "call" on September 9, 1889, for a "salary of $525,00 per year, a free house, three offerings per year and incidentals." Pastor Martin Gulbrandsen followed Nodtvedt five years later. Gulbrandsen served several nearby congregations as well. Following Gulbrandsen's sudden illness and death in 1908, Reverend Christian Sybilrud next assumed the pastorship at Our Savior's. In 1910, during Sybilruds tenure the congregation purchased thirty hymnals for services in English. The major portion of church services, however, continued to be conducted in Norwegian for some time to come. Also in 1910, serious consideration was given to enlarging the church and building a basement. The plans for construction however, were postponed for a number of years. After Sybilrud resigned because of ill health in early 1912, he was succeeded eventually by Pastor S. O. Rondesvedt in early 1913.

In 1917, the synod to which Our Savior's belonged, the United Lutheran Church, formed a union with the Norwegian Synod and the Hauge Synod to be known as the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America. The rift which had occurred nationally in the 1880's among the many Lutheran Churches had been somewhat healed because none of the churches in this new synod were affiliated with the Missouri Synod. In Westby, talk of re-uniting Our Savior's Church with the Coon Prairie Church had gone on for a number of years. In fact, Pastor Rondesvedt had conducted bi-monthly English services on Sunday evenings in the Coon Prairie Church since 1915. So the synodical merger added impetus to the move toward local union. At Our Savior's space limitations within the church that had almost resulted in large scale remodeling and an addition in 1911, became critical by this time. Therefore, many people were pleased when articles of union were worked out and accepted by both churches in 1919. The new church was to be called the Trinity Lutheran Church. It seemed, therefore that the conflict engendered nearly forty years earlier by disagreement over church policy on the level of the synod that led to the creation of Our Savior's would be resolved locally due to agreement on the synodical level as well. The new Trinity Church, however, was not to become a reality because many problems remained unsolved. The bitterness caused by the original separation still lingered among older members. This reason plus the added burden for a pastor with a significantly larger congregation combined with the problem of the cost of a new and necessarily larger building as Trinity would require, all caused hesitation. Consequently, by 1921, the plans for union and therefore the plans for construction of the Trinity Church were dropped.[99]

With the decision to discontinue the Trinity Church construction it became necessary for the members of Our Savior's to renew the proposals

for a new church of their own. In 1920, the committee in charge of soliciting funds for the project "reported that $38,875.00 had been subscribed up to that time."[100] This, however, was found to be only half the amount needed for construction, so for the time being the congregation decided not to build. Overcrowding forced them to reconsider and by April of 1921 they decided to build. Construction began in October, 1921 and the newly completed church costing $84,615.67 was dedicated in June, 1922.

The Growth of Schools

When Badax County was organized each civil town had its own school superintendant. In 1860-61 the state abolished the old system and created the position of County Superintendant of Schools. The early teachers were paid $35 a month for a male and $25 a month for a female teacher. In 1862, the county board assessed $88.30 for it's share of the county school tax assessment of $1,401.41 of which $460.64 went for the county school superintendant's annual salary.[101]

In 1862 there were 160 schools in the county, six in the town of Christiana. The first school erected in the town of Christiana was in 1851 in section thirty-five. The building was 22 x 26 feet and soon burned down.[102] The History of Vernon County (1884) claimed that in 1862 (probably 1882 really) a new school was built in the "pleasant and thriving village of Westby for $745.... The building is neat and roomy and contains two departments, one in each story."[103] According to two early teachers, however, Mrs. R. H. Nustad (Emilie Westby) and Mrs. Minnie Knudson, children in the area went to either the Clockmaker, Gilbertson or Unseth schools until 1880 when Emilie Westby, then about fifteen, opened a private school in a room above her father's store.[104] Emilie Westby recalls of her own school days at the Clockmaker school east of Westby: "We had a long way to go to school.... We had almost as many months of

Norwegian school as English - not more than six or seven months a year."[105]

Eleven children attended Miss Westby's first school in 1880. In 1881, Miss Matilda Gilbertson opened another school over the Simon Syverson Machine Shop and in 1883 a new school district was formed of which three early pioneers, John Michelet, Andrew Moens, and Simon Syverson were board members. The new board authorized purchase of a school site on the lot where the Westby Co-operative Creamery now stands on South Main Street, and built a two story building.[106]

Miss Regina Gullord was the first teacher at this new school. She received twenty-five dollars a month for coping with an enrollement of eighty pupils. By 1885, it was deemed necessary to hire a second teacher as well as to occupy the second floor of the building because of increased attendance. In the fall of 1893, the upper grades were transferred to the Temperance Hall across the street. In 1894, a new four room, two story frame building was erected on the site of the old school at a cost of approximately $2,800. Eventually two grades were assigned to each room and by 1898 the school was designated a first class graded school under the principalship of J. K. Kjorlog.[107]

As the town continued to grow, an expansion of school facilities was necessary. Therefore, at the 1908 annual meeting, voters decided to erect a new school building at a cost limited to $20,000. This building was completed in 1910 on a portion of the present site of the Westby schools on two and one fourth acres purchased from Wittus Bergum. Also in 1910, a ninth grade was formed with an additional class being added each year until Westby High School graduated it's first class of fourteen students in 1914.

Temperance and Debate

By the 1890's two societies, Temperance and Debate, both reflective of national institutions, had appeared in Westby. The Temperance Hall was

erected in the 1880's on South Main Street across from where the Westby Co-operative Creamery now stands. Although Westby apparently had no one as fanatic as the hatchet wielding Carry Nation, there were at least two anti-liquor organizations active in Westby during those days - The "Womens Christian Temperance Union" (W.C.T.U.) and the Wisconsin Norwegian Total Abstinence Association which later became part of the Wisconsin Scandinavian State Temperance Society.

In January 1896, the Viroqua Republican reported that "Westby not only has one of the largest temperance organizations of its kind in the state but... also has a magnificent hall of its own." They were thinking of expanding their facilities and the Republican pleaded: "Kind friends, let us all extend a helping hand to further a cause so grand."[108] In February of 1896 the State Norwegian Total Abstinence Association meeting in La Crosse elected Westby residents as two of its five officers.- S. Saugstad, treasurer, and T. Thoreson, financial secretary.[109] In March 1897, in response to an upcoming "wet or dry" referendum in Westby, the Republican advertised the following message: "There will be a mass meeting of all who are opposed to saloons in this village on Saturday evening March 20 at Temperance Hall. All are urgently requested to be out as the subject will be thoroughly discussed."[110] Apparently their meeting helped their cause because the April 9, 1897 issue of the Republican triumphantly proclaimed: "Temperance Prevails. Our village goes dry by a vote of 81 to 22. The Temperance people are greatly rejoiced over the results of the election as they feared with the help of the breweries, the license men would be able to carry the town."

Perhaps the initial success of their effort to defeat the tavern interests caused complacency among the temperance people because by April 1898, there were only twelve members in the Westby W.C.T.U. with an average

attendance at their meetings of seven.[111] However, at this same time the Republican proudly announced the progress of two Westby residents with drinking problems: "C. A. Olson and Steen Steenson returned from Elroy Saturday last, where they went to receive the Keeley cure. We are glad to say they are feeling fine and happy in knowing they are not a slave to rum."[112]

The Westby Lyceum, a debating society, was organized by the late 1890's. It held meetings from the fall through June and debated such topics as the following: "Resolved - Benjamin Franklin deserves more gratitude from our country than Thomas Jefferson;" and "Resolved - That the barbarian is more happy than the civilized man;" and "Resolved - Politics causes more trouble than religion;" and a topic of contemporary national interest, "Resolved - The Hawaiian Islands should be annexed to the United States." Some of the topics had more of a local interest than others as the Republican of March 18, 1898, reported. "Resolved - that a bachelor leads a happier life than a married man - Olaf Peterson takes the affirmative side and uses himself as a living example."[113]

A more serious topic of particular local concern was the following - "Resolved - That the use of the Norwegian language should be encouraged among the descendants of Norwegians in the United States." Normally, three people would prepare for the affirmative side of the issue and three for the negative and two close friends took opposite positions on this topic. Dr. Johan Schreiner, a University of Christiania trained physician took the affirmative and Andrew H. Dahl, future Wisconsin State Treasurer and himself a son of Norwegian immigrants took the negative. The negative position was judged the winner on the basis of the argument that time spent studying Norwegian could be more profitably spent learning English in order that the individual would not speak brokenly.[114]

CONCLUSION

The years that passed between the mid-nineteenth century and the early twentieth century were years that witnessed a great change in Coon Prairie and Westby. When Even Gullord arrived in 1848 and thanked God for allowing him to find this unclaimed land that he was seeking, the county was Badax, the township part of Viroqua and the name "Westby" that of relatives back in Norway. American Indians, mostly, were the only people who had witnessed Gullord's ".... vast expanse of swaying grass and groves of trees."

During the next fifty years or so, pioneers not only struggled with attempts to civilize a wilderness, but fought disease, the uncertainties of the weather and their southern countrymen. The concern of farmers changed from mainly grain to tobacco and dairying. The railroad brought with it not only easy access to eastern markets but an opportunity for local economic expansion as well. Consequently, the development of Westby from a general store and a few houses to a busy small town became possible. Also during these years, local religious feelings became a microcosm of national disputes that resulted in physical division and bitter feelings for a time. Schools grew with the population increases as did interest in nationwide movements such as labor unrest, temperance, and debate. In summary, the residents of Coon Prairie and Westby, like people in other developing communities throughout the nation, exchanged the problems of trying to tame a wilderness for the problems of trying to successfully interact with each other.

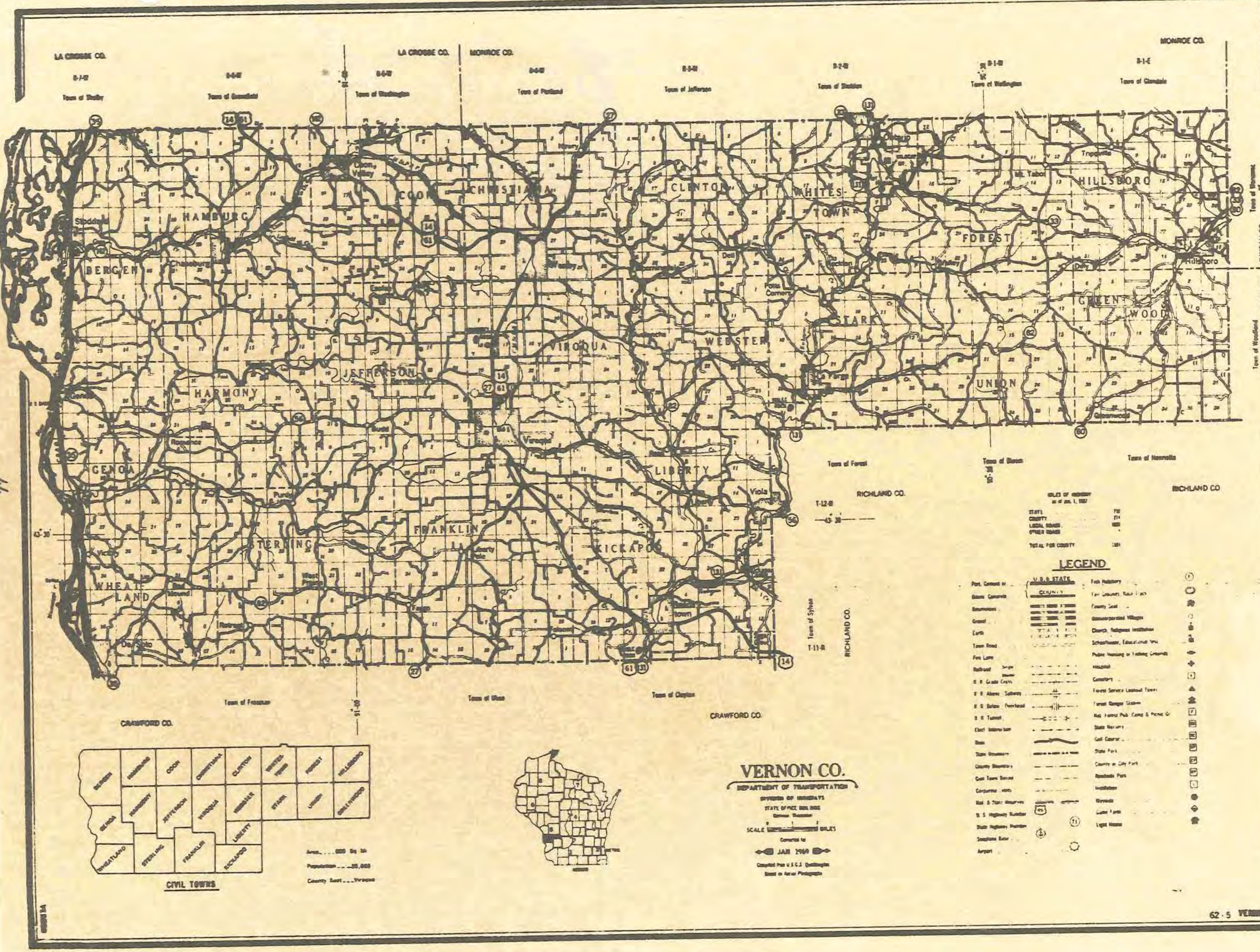
TABLE I

CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS THAT SERVED FROM THE TOWNSHIP OF CHRISTIANA

Infantry Regiment	Name	War Victim's Cause of Death
Third Infantry	Thomas Slagg, Captain	
Sixth Infantry	John C. Barry, Corporal	
	Hollis W. Bishop*	As Prisoner of War
	William R. Carnes	
	Albert Emons*	Disease
	Daniel Taylor	
Thirteenth Infantry	Hans O. Hanson	
Fifteenth Infantry	Ole T. Olson, Sergeant	
	Peter O. Larson	
	Simon Anderson*	As Prisoner of War
	Thorger Erickson	
	Peter Johnson*	Disease
	Ole Kjostilson	
	Charles Black	
	Tositere Larsen	
	Erick Olsen	
	Johannes Simensen	
Seventeenth Infantry	Andrew Janson	
	Amos H. Hanse*	Disease
Twenty-fifth Infantry	Even T. Songsted	
	James Everson	
	Simon Rerstad, Corporal*	Killed in action
	Erick Anderson*	Disease
	Ole Peterson*	Disease
Fiftieth Infantry	Torgee Jansen	
	Peter C. Hoonreon	
	Ole A. Knudson	
	Peter Matinson	
	John S. Rogers	
	Christopher Trubon	
Fifty-third Infantry	Andres Anderson	
	Christian Everson	

Source: History of Vernon County, (Springfield, Ill.: Union Publishing Co.,) 1884, p. 210

* Civil War victims



LA CROSSE CO.
MONROE CO.
JUNEAU CO.
SAUK CO.
RICHLAND CO.
CRAWFORD CO.
HAMBURG
BERGEN
COON
CHRISTIANA
CLINTON
WHITESTOWN
HILLSBORO
FOREST
GREENWOOD
STARK
WEBSTER
VIROQUA
JEFFERSON
HARMONY
UNION
GENOA
LIBERTY
FRANKLIN
STERLING
KICKAPOO
WHEATLAND
Hillsboro
Viroqua
Viola
Stoddard
Chaseburg
Coon Valley
Westby
Readstown
La Farge
De Soto
Romance
Purdy
Liberty Pole
Genoa
Victory
Tripoli
Yuba
Dell
Rockton
Ontario
Cashton
Town of Shelby
Town of Greenfield
Town of Washington
Town of Portland
Town of Jefferson
Town of Sheldon
Town of Wellington
Town of Glendale
Town of Freeman
Town of Utica
Town of Clayton
Town of Forest
Town of Henrietta
Town of Sylvan
Town of Woodland
T-12-N
T-13-N
T-14-N
T-11-N
43°30'
LEGEND
CIVIL TOWNS
VERNON CO.
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS
SCALE MILES
JAN 1969
County Seat...Viroqua
62-5 VERNON

FOOTNOTES

[1] Lona Bergh Jorgensen, "The Descendants in the United States of Clemet and Marthe Bergh, " No. 0.68.398, Vernon County Museum, (Washington D. C.) December, 1965, p. 2

[2] Earl M. Rogers, ed., Memoirs of Vernon County, (Madison, Wisconsin: Western Historical Association), 1907, p. 54

[3] History of Vernon County, (Springfield, Ill.: Union Publishing Co.) 1884, pp. 138-40 and 480-481

[4] "Oslo," The World Book Encyclopedia Vol. XIV, (Chicago: Field Enterprise Educational Corp.) 1975, p. 656

[5] History of Vernon County, p. 111

[6] Ibid., p. 326-327

[7] John G. Gregory, ed., Southwestern Wisconsin: A History of Old Crawford County, Vol. II, (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co.), p. 1411-12

[8] History of Vernon County, p. 328

[9] Mrs. R. H. Nustad, "Recollections of Local Pioneer Days," Westby Times, Aug. 1955 (from clipping file in Westby Public Library).

[10] History of Vernon County, p. 125

[11] Ibid., p. 130

[12] Ibid.; Robert E. Gard and L. G. Sorden, The Romance of Wisconsin Place Names, (New York: October House Inc.), 1968, p. 140. The name Winneshiek meant "Dirty, brackish or muddy" in the Winnebago language. Chief Winneshiek led a tribe of villagers on the Pecatonica River in southwestern Wisconsin and was so named because he wore a beard, an unusual custom for Indians. Chief Winneshiek later was moved by the government to Nebraska and refused to be resettled there. He returned eventually to Wisconsin. A descendent, Corporal Mitchell Red Cloud received the Congressional Medal of Honor (posthumously) for gallantry in the Korean War.

[13] History of Vernon County, p. 132

[14] Robert Carrington Nesbit, Wisconsin: A History, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), 1973, pp. 157-61; Olaf Morgan Norlie, History of the Norwegian People in America, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House), 1925, pp. 121 and 148

[15] Henry Colin Campbell, Sec. Board of Editors and Writers, Wisconsin in Three Centuries 1634-1905, Vol. III, (New York: Publishing Society of N. Y.), 1906, pp. 54, 55

[16] "Norway, "The World Book Encyclopedia Vol. XIV, p. 420; Nesbit, Wisconsin: A History, pp. 157-161

17 Hjalmer R. Holand, Coon Prairie, parts orally transcribed by Esther Bakke, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House), 1927, pp. 19, 98-99

18 Ibid., p. 98-99

19 John A. Houkom, editor, "Coon Prairie Letters," Wisconsin Magazine of History 1943-44, Vol. XXVII, pp. 439-445

20 Nesbit, Wisconsin: A History, pp. 157-161

21 Holand, Coon Prairie, p. 99

22 Nesbit, Wisconsin: A History, pp. 157-161

23 Gregory, Old Crawford County II, p. 1419

24 Ibid., p. 1419

25 Nustad, "Pioneer Days,"

26 Gregory, Old Crawford County II, pp. 1714-15

27 Holand, Coon Prairie, p. 19

28 Ibid.

29 Gregory, Old Crawford County II, p. 1419

30 History of Vernon County, pp. 484, 485; Gregory, Old Crawford County, IV, pp. 13-15

31 History of Vernon County, p. 480; Nustad, "Pioneer Days"

32 History of Vernon County, pp. 143, 321, 480-89, 697

33 Campbell, Three Centuries III, p. 243

34 Holand, Coon Prairie, p. 98-99

35 Houkom, "Coon Prairie Letters," pp. 439-45

36 Ibid.

37 P. J. Flugstad, Our Savior's Lutheran Church Through Fifty Years, 1888-1938, (Westby, Wisconsin) 1938, p. 30

38 History of Vernon County, p. 485-86

39 Holand, Coon Prairie, p. 31

40 Viroqua Expositor, Jan. 29, 1859, p. 1

41 Holand, Coon Prairie, p. 78

42 English translation of Norwegian words: folklaring - explanation of Luther's Catechism, a basis of the Lutheran faith, mylsa - milk pudding, prim - brown cheese made of whey, bresta- hardtack or dried biscuits; Campbell, Three Centuries III, p. 244

43 Rogers, Memoirs, pp. 54-59

44 Holand, Coon Prairie, p. 78

45 Ibid., p. 29

46 Nustad, "Pioneer Days,"

47 History of Vernon County, p. 481

48 Holand, Coon Prairie, p. 31

49 Western Times, Sept. 13, 1856

50 Viroqua Expositor, Feb. 5, 1859

51 Holand, Coon Prairie, p. 30

52 Nustad, "Pioneer Days"

53 Document No. 0.268S B, Vernon County Museum; Historical Atlas of Wisconsin, . (Milwaukee: Snyder Van Vechtan Co.), 1878, pp. 243-244

54 Viroqua Expositor, Jan. 15, 1859

55 History of Vernon County, pp. 321, 322

56 Viroqua Expositor, Sept. 13, 1862; History of Vernon County, pp. 202-10

57 Campbell, Three Centuries III, pp. 232-40

58 History of Vernon County (1884), pp. 202-203 and Campbell, Three Centuries III, pp. 232-40

59 Campbell, Three Centuries III, pp. 232-40

60 Ibid. The information for the two preceding paragraphs came from Campbell.

61 Personal War Sketches presented to Alexander Lowrie Post 36 Department of Wisconsin. Grand Army of the Republic, Viroqua, Wisconsin, p. 38

62 Rogers, Memoirs, p. 526

63 History of Vernon County, pp. 489-90; Viroqua Republican, Jan. 14, 1898, p. 1

64 History of Vernon County, pp. 489-90

65 Nustad, "Pioneer Days"

66 Viroqua Republican, Mar. 4, 1898, p.11

67 Nustad, "Pioneer Days" The English translation of lefse is potato cake.

68 History of Vernon County, pp. 320-21

69 Vernon County Censor, Nov. 20, 1878, p. 1; Viroqua Republican, Aug. 11, 1899, p. 11

70 Nustad, "Pioneer Days"

71 Gregory, Old Crawford County II, pp. 1462-63

72 Nustad, "Pioneer Days"

73 History of Vernon County, p. 490

74 Rogers, Memoirs, p. 623; Viroqua Republican, Jan. 24, 1895, p. 11 Westby Times, July 4, 1970, p. 1; Viroqua Republican, Aug. 11, 1899

75 Houkom, "Coon Prairie Letters," pp. 439045

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.

78 Gregory, Old Crawford County, Vol. II, pp. 1466-67

79 H. F. Walling, C. E. Atlas of the State of Wisconsin, (Boston and Detroit: Walling, Tackabury and Co.), 1876, p. 20. In 1870 crop production in Vernon County of 94,967 improved acres was as follows: Wheat, 526,098 bushels; rye, 2,759 bushels; corn, 272,424 bushels; oats, 436,136 bushels; barley, 23,532 bushels; wool, 61,600 lbs.; potatoes, 74,504 bushels; butter, 482,428 lbs.; cheese, 1,835 lbs.; hay, 19,879 tons; hops, 97,200 bushels. The number of hands employed was 184 and the value of all production was $1,405,562. History of Vernon County, pp. 320-21

80 Viroqua Republican, Mar. 17, 1896, p. 11

81 Nustad, "Pioneer Days"

82 History of Vernon County, p. 817

83 Viroqua Republican, Feb. 19, 1897, p. 11

84 Ibid., March 4, 1898, p. 11

85 Ibid., Jan. 13, 1899, p. 11; Jan. 5, 1900, p. 11

86 Our Savior's Lutheran Church Through Fifty Years 1888-1938, p. 7, 8; History of Vernon County, p. 694-95

87 Westby Witness, (Paper of Coon Prairie Church), Aug. - Sept., 1927, (Westby Wisconsin); Our Savior's Lutheran Church - Fifty Years, p. 8; Holand, Coon Prairie, pp. 31-33; History of Vernon County, pp. 694-95

88 Our Savior's Fifty Years, p. 8

89 Western Times, Aug. 16, 1856, p. 1

90 Holand, Coon Prairie, pp. 31-33

91 Jorgensen, Clemet and Bergh, pp. 3 - 4

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 85th Anniversary 1852-1937 Coon Prairie Congregation, Westby, Wisconsin; Viroqua Republican, Sept. 17, 1895

95 Vernon County Censor, Oct. 19, 1910, p. 1

96 Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press), 1955, p. 212

97 Ibid., p. 213

98 Our Savior's Lutheran Church Forty Years Jubilee 1888-1928, Translated by R. T. Bentson and Thomas Stevens, Document No. 67.682.7 Vernon County Museum; Vernon County History, pp. 483-84. The Westby Methodist Episcopal Church erected a building some years earlier on section twenty-six northeast of Westby and began construction of a church in town in 1884.

99 Our Savior's Lutheran Church - Fifty Years, pp. 11-20

100 Ibid.

101 Rogers, Memoirs, p. 122; History of Vernon County; Viroqua Expositor, Dec. 27, 1862

102 History of Vernon County, p. 428

103 Ibid. p. 393

104 Minnie Knudson, Westby Times, March, 1961

105 Nustad, "Pioneer Days"

106 Knudson, Westby Times

107 Document No. 0.74.455, p. 13; Knudson, Westby Times

108 Viroqua Republican, Jan. 21, 1896, p. 11

109 Ibid., Feb. 4, 1896, p. 11

110 Ibid., Mar. 12, 1897, p. 11

111 Ibid., April 8, 1898, p. 11

112 Ibid.,

113 Ibid., Feb. 26, 1898, June 25, 1899

114 Ibid.

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