

Historic German and Norwegian Settlement:  
Ethnicity and Agriculture in the Lower  
Wisconsin Riverway

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Lower Wisconsin Scenic Riverway is home to many of Wisconsin's geological, cultural, and historic treasures. Deemed an important historical asset, the Wisconsin government took measures to protect this area of the Wisconsin River and the surrounding scenery in 1989 in attempts to preserve the area's diverse resources for future generations. European immigration and American-born migration and settlement have heavily influenced this region of Wisconsin, an impact that is still felt within the region today. As a group, we plan to assess the immigration of German and Norwegian peoples to the Lower Wisconsin Riverway. We will discuss their origins, settlement locations within the region, and finally, focus on the evolution of the two groups' agricultural practices throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Additionally, we hope to explore a relationship between ethnicity and type of agricultural development and production within the counties, and certain ethnic settlements, along the Lower Wisconsin Riverway.

## **IMMIGRATION**

### **Norwegian Push Factors**

Like any mass migration, the reasons for leaving were as diverse as the people who migrated. One could look at the national, regional, and individual scale and get very different trends for leaving at each. We hope to highlight some of the main reasons for migrating to help illustrate why both Norwegians and Germans left their respective homelands. During the era of mass emigration to the United States from Europe, only Ireland lost a larger percentage of its citizens to the United States than Norway (Flom 1909: 27). The main flow of Norwegian immigration to Wisconsin occurred from 1838-1864 (Fapso 2000: 10). At this time, Norway had begun a switch to a commercial type of farming rather than simply subsistence and small market farming (Fapso 2000: 6). At this time, Norway was already short on land. In fact, only about one fourth of

Norwegian land was arable (Flom 1909: 20). This, coupled with the Norwegian custom of dividing land up between all of the heirs, left even less land per capita for agriculture – a common livelihood among Norwegians at that time. With the increase in commercial farming came the decrease of sharecroppers or those who rented their farmland in some other form from a landowner. A growing population, a rise in commercial farming, and the increase of a landless class with few job opportunities were the principle reasons for Norwegian immigration.

### **German Push Factors**

The German mass migration was much larger and longer than the Norwegian. It spanned from 1845-1893 with some lulls during that period (Zeitlin 2000: 6). In addition, Germany being a much larger state, even if not united at this time, had people from many different areas migrating. These larger portions of time and space mean that the reasons for German immigration were more in number and complexity. Of course, the growing European population had its effect on German immigrants as well as the fragmentation of the land, similar to the Norwegian experience.

Another reason for immigration was an overbearing government. Local governments had control over economic activity and could regulate population with this power (Bungert et al 2006: xvi). One even had to apply to leave certain German states (Bungert et al 2006: xvi). Crop failures and famine also contributed to agricultural and economic reasons for leaving. Another push factor in Germany was the crackdown on supporters of the 1848 and 1849 revolutions. These people of the “Free Thought” movement were political and religious outsiders (Zeitlin 2000: 7)

### **Pull Factors**

One reason for German migration specifically to Wisconsin was the Wisconsin office of

immigration, which operated in two different time spans, the first being from 1852 to 1855 (Strhshänk and Thiel 2005: 5). While the office was not specifically created for German immigrants, a great deal of its work was geared towards Germans. The office of the commissioner was based in New York City and the commissioner himself was in charge of promoting Wisconsin and assisting those who wished to immigrate here. Of the office's 60,000 pamphlets it produced from 1852 to 1855, 35,000 were printed in German with the other portion representing all other languages spoken in Europe (Strhshänk and Thiel 2005: 135). These pamphlets of course were not the reason Germans came to Wisconsin, but they surely encouraged them to do so.

### **Norwegian Peoples and Settlement Regions**

Norway's geography limits the extent of populated areas. Mountains through its center and the northern lands are subject to a harsh Arctic climate. Given these factors, along with a relatively small population, the areas Norwegian immigrants could come from are few in number.

Norwegian immigrants to the Lower Wisconsin Riverway primarily came from four regions located on the west coast and in the south of Norway. The majority of the Norwegian immigrants came from Sogn and Voss on the west coast, and Telemark and Numedal in the south (Flom 1909: 108,265). The earliest Norwegian settlements in Wisconsin were along the Illinois border in Rock County. The first Norwegian settler staked a claim there in 1838 (Qualey 1938: 46). However, those first settlements in Rock County did not prove to be the most important. Lake Koshkonong was the most important Norwegian settlement in Wisconsin during this early period (Qualey 1938: 52). It served as the early Mecca for Norwegian immigration to the state as well as the Midwest. Dane county was and still is by far the most Norwegian county on the Lower Wisconsin Riverway. Stoughten, Blue Mounds, and Cottage

Grove became major centers for Norwegian settlement. Madison only became a home for a large number of Norwegians relatively later, around the turn of the century (Flom 1909, 249). The reason for this was a large group of Norwegian farmers retiring to the city in their old age.

The heart of the Lower Wisconsin served like a buffer zone between Wisconsin's main areas of Norwegian settlement. South central Wisconsin, including Dane, Iowa, and Rock counties is Wisconsin's older zone of Norwegian settlement. The other zone lies just north of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway on the Upper Mississippi River bordering Minnesota. For whatever reason, Norwegians favored settlements on the Lower Wisconsin mostly in Dane and Iowa counties.

### **German Peoples and Settlement Regions**

Germany dwarfs Norway in terms of land area and population. During the main period of immigration, Norway was one semi autonomous (under the rule of Sweden) state with a homogenous people (some might argue that dialects separated Norwegians, but this was never a cause of severe political fragmentation). On the other hand, Germany consisted of at least thirty political units in 1815 and included a diverse group of peoples including Swiss, Poles, Jews, and Austrians (Zeitlin 2000: 6). So a discussion on the origins of "Germans" in Wisconsin can be complicated by regional identities.

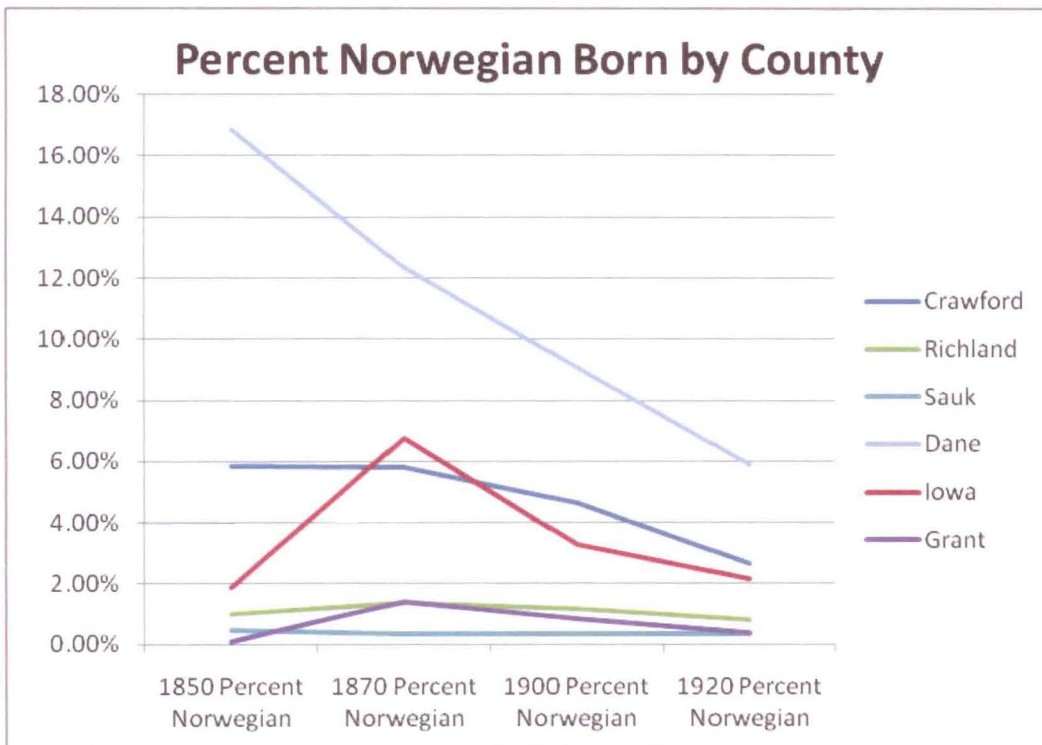
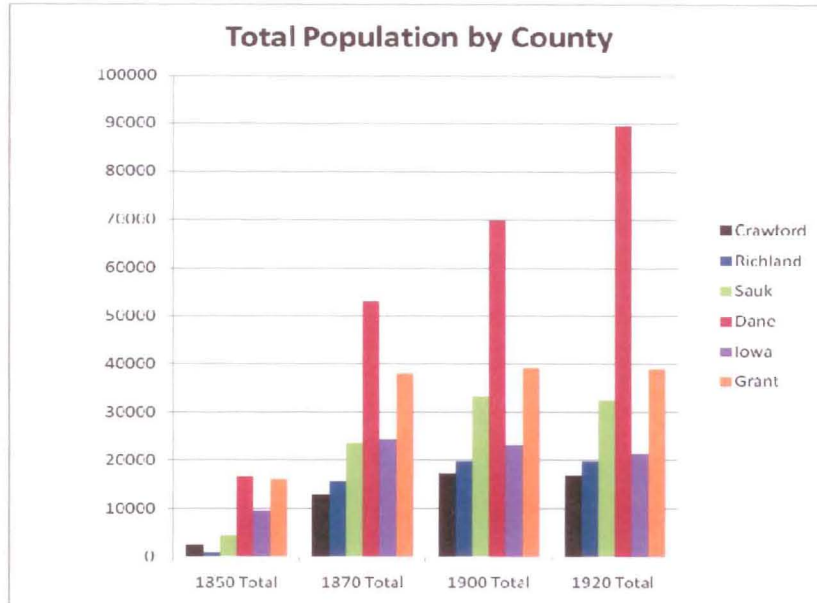
For the most part, a large number of South and Middle Germans, which included people from Rhenish Prussia, Switzerland, Bavaria, and Saxony (Levi 1898: 367), were the main Germanic settlers of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway. In addition, the population had a smaller number of North Germans, which included people from Meklenburg and Prussia (Levi 1898: 351).

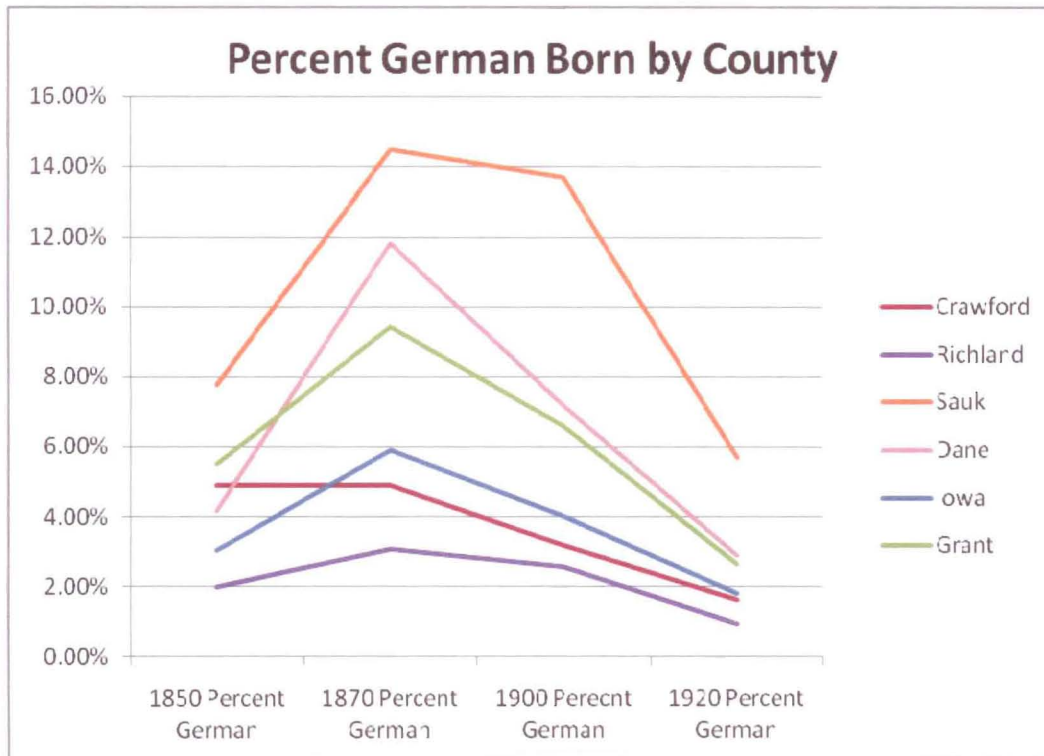
The main areas of German settlement on the Lower Wisconsin were on the river itself

bordering Dane and Sauk counties (Bungert et al 2006: 89). Major centers of German settlement in the area were Roxbury, Cross Plains, Middleton, and Madison (Bungert et al 2006: 89). The Lower Wisconsin Riverway was not the main focus of German immigration to Wisconsin. The majority of Germans settled along the Lake Michigan shore and in the Fox River Valley area.

In terms of numbers (these numbers are taken from the United States Census for their respective years for people claiming to be born in Germany or Norway: note the 1870 numbers for Germans come the State of Wisconsin Atlas, 1878), 1870 to 1900 saw the largest amount of Germans and Norwegians move to the Lower Wisconsin. Dane county always had the most of the two groups. In 1870, Dane county had over 6000 Norwegian born and 6000 German born residents. Right around this time can be seen as the peak of immigration to the area. The overall trend shows that the number of German and Norwegian born individuals began to decrease after 1870.

Dane, Iowa, and Crawford counties were the largest recipients of Norwegian immigration. German immigration was more widespread and distributed than that of the Norwegians. The three leading counties for German immigration were Sauk, Dane, and Grant. The proportion of foreign-born Norwegians and Germans to the total population is also quite similar in a couple of counties. Crawford and Iowa share close percentages of the total population of the two groups. Dane county save 1850, in which the percent population of foreign-born Norwegians was double that of Germans, also shows similar percentages.





### Norwegians by County

County	1850 Norwegian Born	1870 Norwegian Born	1900 Norwegian Born	1920 Norwegian Born
Crawford	146	760	809	449
Richland	9	214	231	155
Sauk	21	83	116	106
Dane	2803	6560	6337	5264
Iowa	177	1662	764	467
Grant	15	535	323	155

### Germans by County

County	1850 German Born	1870 German Born	1900 German Born	1920 German Born
Crawford	122	640	552	271
Richland	18	481	509	184
Sauk	339	3433	4563	1848
Dane	692	6276	5003	2581
Iowa	289	1447	933	390
Grant	893	3585	2594	1028

Total Population by County

County	1850 Total	1870 Total	1900 Total	1920 Total
Crawford	2498	13078	17392	16775
Richland	903	15731	19815	19774
Sauk	4371	23711	33361	32570
Dane	16639	53062	69763	89459
Iowa	9524	24545	23171	21509
Grant	16172	38000	39243	39051

## AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES IN A NEW WORLD

### Settlement Landscapes

No matter the origin of the immigrant, farming was a common way of life in their adoptive Wisconsin settlements. In fact, agriculture is still a vital economic practice for many throughout the state. There is much information regarding early farming practices throughout the state, however, this study aims to focus on agricultural choices and techniques utilized by Norwegian and German immigrants to the state, particularly those who settled within the region of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway and the surrounding present day counties of Dane, Sauk, Iowa, Richland, Grant, and Crawford. While Wisconsin may still be renowned as “the dairy state,” agriculture originally practiced by the immigrants within the state may have been more diversified than one might imagine.

Types of agricultural production often depend on the land and the opportunities that it is able to provide. Immigrants to Wisconsin discovered a “diverse landscape of prairie, forest and oak savannah” (Blungert, Kluge, and Ostergren 2006: 123). As shown in Figure 1, pre-settlement land cover data indicates that the Lower Wisconsin Riverway consisted mainly of forested areas along with some prairie and wetland landscapes (Finley 1976). Many settlers to the area, therefore, faced the challenge of creating homesteads and farms in primarily forested

landscapes. Forested areas usually provide a promise of soil fertility, however one must first clear trees and stumps before buildings can be erected or crops can be planted (Blungert, Kluge, and Ostergren 2006: 123).

Historically, academics suggested that German and Norwegian immigrants often chose forested and hilly areas to settle because that landscape was comparable to their familiar homeland and that they were comfortable with farming techniques required for such areas (Blungert, Kluge, and Ostergren 2006: 128). More recently, scholars argue against such cultural stereotypes in favor of certain economic factors (Blungert, Kluge, and Ostergren 2006: 129-131). Start-up costs were generally greater on the prairies and while forested areas required more initial work, trees provided settlers with additional resources (Blungert, Kluge, and Ostergren 2006: 128-130). For example, lumber was a necessary commodity for building important homestead structures, such as houses and barns. Thus, choosing homestead areas that included forests lowered start-up costs and provided immigrants with a potential additional source of income. More specifically, scholars like Hildegard Binder Johnson argue that immigrants typically chose settlements with access to water, as waterways were the main mode of transportation in the mid 1800s. As the most efficient way to transport goods, such as crops, access to water was essential to the livelihood of many farms (Blungert, Kluge, and Ostergren 2006: 131).

### **Wheat Production**

During the time of the mass migration of German and Norwegian immigrants to Wisconsin, wheat production in the state was at its peak. Wheat producers from New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio are credited with bringing the practice of wheat farming with them to their new settlements in Wisconsin (Schafer 1922: 84). In 1840, it is estimated that five bushels per capita

were produced throughout the country, creating a surplus without substantial foreign markets for which to export. However, the population influx that occurred from 1840 to 1850 was about 20% higher than the increase in wheat production, relieving the surplus and increasing domestic demand for wheat (Schafer 1922: 81-83). Wisconsin wheat farmers soon began reaping economic benefits from exporting their crops to a growing European market as old wheat producing states such as New York, Virginia, Ohio and other eastern states produced enough wheat to satisfy the domestic demand (Schafer 1922: 84). Additionally, significant innovations in wheat harvesting and the addition of several key railroad lines connecting the lower Wisconsin Riverway via Prairie du Chien in the 1850s made wheat production more efficient, more profitable, and thus, more appealing to new immigrant farmers in the region (Schafer 1922: 88-89).

The “golden years” of wheat production in southern Wisconsin soon began their decline. Severe droughts in 1858 and 1859 began the downfall of wheat farming in Wisconsin. The start of the American Civil War in 1861 pushed the land to its limit for wheat production and the entrance of the chinch bug made wheat production extremely difficult (Thompson 1907: 379). Additionally, wheat harvests are greatest on land with little or no previous crop exposure and thus, the land gradually produced less wheat. For these reasons, by 1879, wheat farming in the state and the Lower Wisconsin Riverway had generally been abandoned. Forested areas took too long to sufficiently clear for wheat production and the farmers that chose to stay on their original homesteads looked toward other crops to produce (Schafer 1922: 94-95). Additionally, wheat production on the plains of the Midwest was increasingly becoming successful. The rise in the supply of wheat gradually eroded wheat prices and it became increasingly difficult to profit from wheat production in Wisconsin (Ibarra and Strickton 1989: 5).

## **Diversified Farming**

The ultimate decline of wheat did not lead to another one-crop system in the state or the Lower Wisconsin Riverway. Instead, farmers chose a combination of crops to support their farms (Thompson 1907: 380). This farming technique has come to be known as “diversified farming” (Schafer 1922: 97). Between 1850 and 1880, wheat had by far been the dominant crop produced in Wisconsin. However, additional crops such as oats, corn, and hay steadily increased throughout the same period and eventually emerged as the chief crops produced by immigrant farmers throughout the state (Thompson 1907: 379). At the same time, livestock productions in the southern counties, including those of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway, also increased as these crops were typically used as feed for livestock (Schafer 1922: 97-98).

Historian Joseph Schafer ultimately argues that the counties surrounding the Lower Wisconsin Riverway, along with a few other southern Wisconsin counties, made the most progress in diversified farming. On average, they produced more feed crops (corn, oats, and hay) than they did cereal crops (wheat, rye, and barley) while the livestock production in the region also rose accordingly. Raising corn, oats, and hay proved to be a safer bet for farmers than wheat. Corn grew well in nearly any soil or land type, with the exception of wetland and heavy clay soils, and generally produced a higher yield per acre than wheat. Of the counties that lie along the lower Wisconsin river, Grant and Dane counties produced 3,408,034 and 2,983,500 bushels of corn respectively in 1880; the fourth and fifth highest corn producing counties in the state (Schafer 1922: 99-100). Oats grew well at any longitude or latitude and crop yields depended heavily on the quality of the soil. Schafer writes that in 1879, Dane county produced the most oats in the state, while Grant, Iowa and Sauk counties are also mentioned as significant oat producing counties. Dane county also led the state in hay production in this period; however,

hay production was best measured on the city level (Schafer 1922: 102-103).

During this time, some farmers in southern Wisconsin also began to experiment with dairy production. The lack of dairy farming in the region led to high prices and low quantities of dairy products, especially cheeses familiar to the foreign-born population in southern Wisconsin. There are several explanations cited for the lack of dairy farming in the region until the decline in wheat production. Some of the most common reasons included lack of appreciation to the benefits of dairy farming, lack of livestock and dairying equipment and/or the means to acquire such items, lack of knowledge in cheese and butter making, and the habit of solely relying on natural prairie grasses as feed for livestock. Prairie grasses in southern Wisconsin only provided about ten to twelve weeks of food for livestock before they become overgrazed and nutrient depleted (Schafer 1922: 106). However, with many farmers practicing more diversified farming techniques after the failure of wheat in the region, livestock supporting crops were grown, which led to the successful ability to feed livestock (Schafer 1922: 107).

### **Norwegian Tobacco Production**

Geographer Karl Raitz concluded his study on tobacco in southwestern Wisconsin with the claim that “soils, climate, and other aspects of the physical environment did little to dictate the distribution of tobacco” in the region. Rather, the practice of tobacco production was the result of familiarity with its growing techniques (Raitz and Cotton 1971: 694). Additional studies indicate an ethnic trend in tobacco production within southwestern Wisconsin. Norwegian-born farmers have typically grown tobacco more often than did other foreign or American-born farmers in southwestern Wisconsin since the late 1800s. In fact, Norwegian immigrants tended to heavily gravitate towards tobacco production as a means of economic supplementation throughout the state (Ibarra and Strickton 1989: 2).

Before Norwegian immigration to the United States, tobacco had never been a crop grown in Norway. Therefore, the common practice of tobacco farming by Norwegian immigrants in Wisconsin cannot be explained by homeland familiarity. Regardless, Norwegian immigrants remained the largest cultural population to raise tobacco in Wisconsin, even through periods when other foreign-born farming communities abandoned the crop (Ibarra and Strickton 1989: 4). The following sections will discuss how Norwegians began raising tobacco and the reasons for their strong support of tobacco production throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Upon arriving in the United States, a large number of Norwegian immigrants were often hired as laborers on many “Yankee” or American-born farms in northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin. Growing Tobacco had been an agricultural practice of Yankee farmers for decades. Originally and frequently produced in the eastern states, Yankee farmers eventually migrated west and brought their knowledge and skill of tobacco farming with them. While working as hired laborers on Yankee tobacco farms, Norwegian immigrant farmers gained extensive knowledge of the crop and its production. Eventually, Norwegian immigrants began to implement tobacco cultivation practices on their own settlements within these regions (Ibarra and Strickton 1989: 4). With typically large families and thus, free labor, tobacco farming became very profitable for the average Norwegian-born farmer. In time, many southwestern Wisconsin farmers called tobacco the “mortgage lifter” as they believed that a farmer only needed two or three good tobacco crops before they could pay off their entire farmstead (Ibarra and Strickton 1989: 5).

During the 1880s, Norwegian farmers began to move away from wheat production, as did many farmers in the region, due to the problem of wheat blight and the rise in wheat production

in the Great Plains. This resulted in the experimentation with alternative farming practices, such as fruit production and the raising of large and small livestock. Norwegian settlers, as well as Germans and other ethnicities in the region soon experimented with dairy production. During the “golden years” of wheat production, hardly anyone practiced dairy farming, which led to dairy products being imported from great distances (Ibarra and Strickton 1989: 5). Eventually, Norwegian-born farmers began the practice of dairy farming as part of diversified farming techniques in the wake of the wheat decline (Ibarra and Strickton 1989: 6).

According to scholars Robert A. Ibarra and Arnold Strickton, dairy farming and tobacco production went hand-in-hand for many Norwegian-born farmers. Tobacco, however profitable, rapidly depletes the soil of nutrients at rates even higher than wheat production. However, in a multi-crop agricultural system, farmers were able to implement crop rotation, thus helping to maintain soil virility. Fertilization is another key aspect of obtaining high crop yields, and is especially true for crops, like tobacco and wheat, that rapidly strip the soil of nutrients. Farmers that practiced dairy farming in addition to tobacco production were typically able to maintain or increase tobacco yields. Dairy farmers were able to use manure, a waste product of livestock production, as a natural fertilizer for their crops. Traditionally, farmers used the manure only to fertilize the tobacco fields, which increased the quality yield of their most profitable crop, while often leaving their remaining fields unfertilized. Thus, the practice of diversified farming, especially dairy production, proved to be an important factor for the sustainability of tobacco production (Ibarra and Strickton 1989: 11).

## **AGRICULTURAL CENSUS DATA**

The sections discussed above show the general trends of agriculture for Wisconsin from the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century with particular emphasis on southern Wisconsin and the counties surrounding the Lower Wisconsin Riverway. Data was collected using historical census and agricultural census data. This data displays the differences between Norwegian and German immigrant farming in the Lower Wisconsin River, and explores the similarities and differences between actual practices in the region and general agricultural practices of German and Norwegian immigrants throughout the state. Graphs comparing the ethnic German and Norwegian agricultural products between counties and the districts of Dane county have been produced using this data.

### **Population Data**

The population data comes from the Federal Census of 1850 and 1860. The population data for 1885 comes from the Wisconsin Agricultural Census. The data for 1850 and 1860 are grouped in households, so the actual number of people in the county may be higher. The actual number of ethnic Germans may be higher in all sources because of the way the state and the federal government classified ethnicity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, your ethnicity was established by where you were born. If you were born in Germany, you were German. If you were born in the United States, you were an American. Even if you spoke German and your parents were German, you were classified as an American under both the state and federal census. In the 1885 state agricultural census, Norwegians are grouped under the term Scandinavian. Therefore, the populations of Norwegians are most likely higher in the 1885 data. The federal census of 1880 could have been used, but it would not be the same time period as the agricultural data. The 1885 population data inside of the Wisconsin Agricultural Census was

consistent with the 1885 agricultural data.

### **County Level Data**

The agricultural data for 1850 comes from the federal agricultural census taken during the same year as the census taken for population. The federal agricultural census was logged individually by name within each county. To create a sum for a county each individual farm had to be added together. Significant German and Norwegian populations are in certain towns in Dane county, however township data is not available in Dane county in the 1850 census. Three districts divide Dane county in the census. No township data is given to be able to group individuals into areas near the Lower Wisconsin River. However, the data for 1885 came from the Wisconsin Agricultural Census. In the Census, the agricultural data is listed in townships and counties. However the population data is listed only by counties, therefore the agricultural data is group into counties as well to be able to compare them to the ethnicity data.

Improved land, woodlands, unimproved land, wheat, butter, and tobacco were chosen to compare across all counties and dates for both German and Norwegian-born settlers. Improved land and unimproved land were chosen because they would be an indicator to show how certain groups used the land. For crops, wheat was a major crop during peak German and Norwegian migration to the Lower Wisconsin Riverway. Butter showed the importance of cattle and cattle produced crops. Finally, secondary sources indicated a strong correlation between Norwegian-born farmers and tobacco production in southwestern Wisconsin. The county level agricultural data was also normalized from its raw numbers to agricultural products per capita because this would decrease the likelihood that the rise shown in tobacco in 1885 was due to Dane County's population alone.

### **Comparing County Level Data**

It is also difficult to determine how Germans and Norwegians compare to one another at the county level because they make up a smaller portion of the population, especially Norwegians. When originally gathering information for this project, the assumption was that the ethnic populations of Germans and Norwegians would be much higher, especially in 1850. However, numerous other immigrant groups, such as Czechs, Irish, and many others are listed in the census. (US Census, 1850) Also listed in the census are many Americans born within the United States. (US Census, 1850)

At the county level, there seems to be no strong correlation between ethnicity and what crops are grown or how much land is improved, unimproved, except for the rise of tobacco in Dane county in 1885. (Casson, 1885) Before the peak of Norwegian immigration, wheat is the most produced crop in 1850 inside Dane county. (US Census, 1850) However, after the peak immigration period, wheat decreases from its 1850 level of 27.81 bushels per person to 17 bushels per person in 1885. (Casson, 1885) By 1885, tobacco replaced wheat as the most produced crop. In 1850, there was no production of tobacco in Dane County, but in 1885 the production increased to 402 pounds per person. (Casson, 1885)

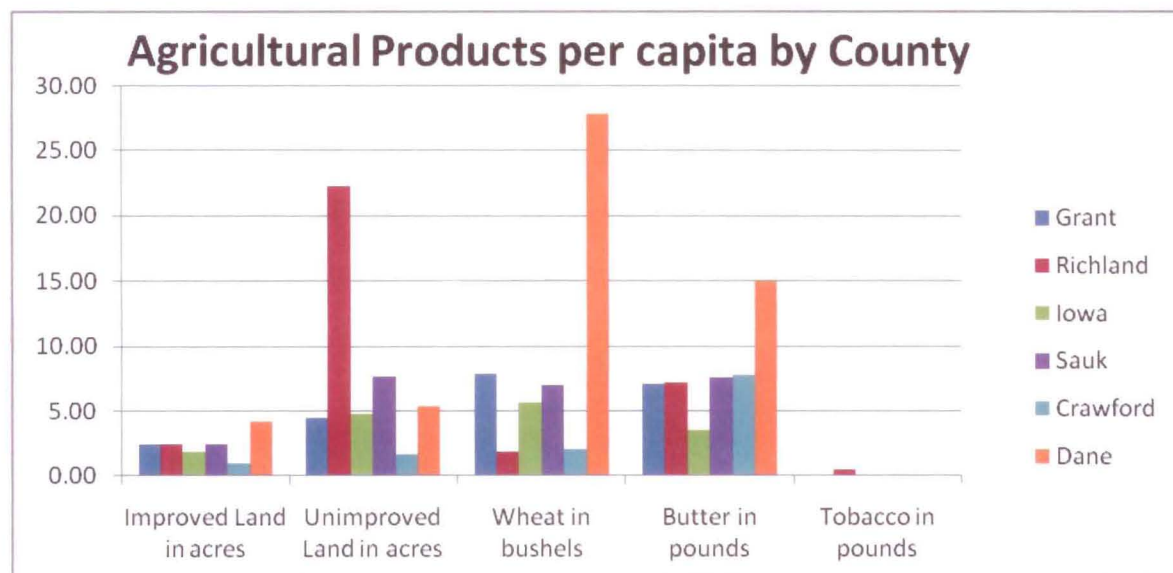
Between other crops at the county level, there are no other significant differences. There is a general increase of crop production throughout the counties, but can be attributed to population growth. Tobacco did not become the dominant crop of any other county, except Dane county where there was a high number of Norwegian Immigrants. Butter production does not seem to be affected by ethnicity. The production of butter is roughly equally distributed per capita throughout the counties. The amount of improved and unimproved land depends on population, not ethnicity. The highest populated county, Dane county has the most improved

land in 1850 and 1885. In 1850, Richland County is the least populated county with 903 people and has the most unimproved land.

Refer to 1850 Population Data given earlier in Results

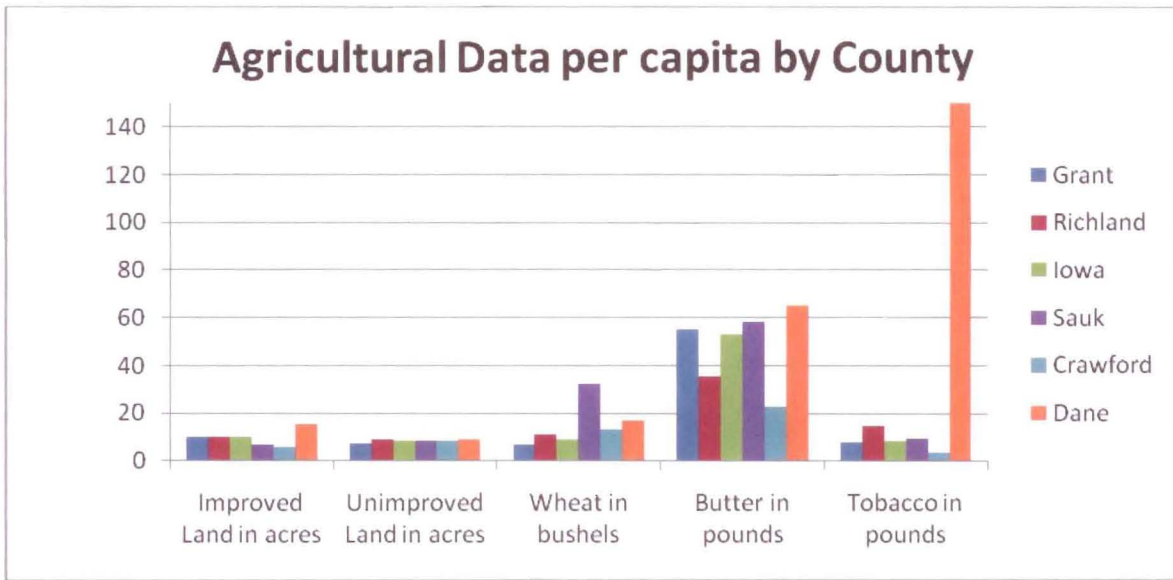
### 1850 Agricultural Data

Agricultural Products	Grant	Richland	Iowa	Sauk	Crawford	Dane
Improved Land in acres	2.46	2.46	1.86	2.47	0.96	4.21
Unimproved Land in acres	4.49	22.23	4.76	7.64	1.67	5.36
Wheat in bushels	7.86	1.85	5.61	6.99	2.06	27.81
Butter in pounds	7.05	7.20	3.47	7.57	7.81	14.93
Tobacco in pounds	0.00	0.43	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00

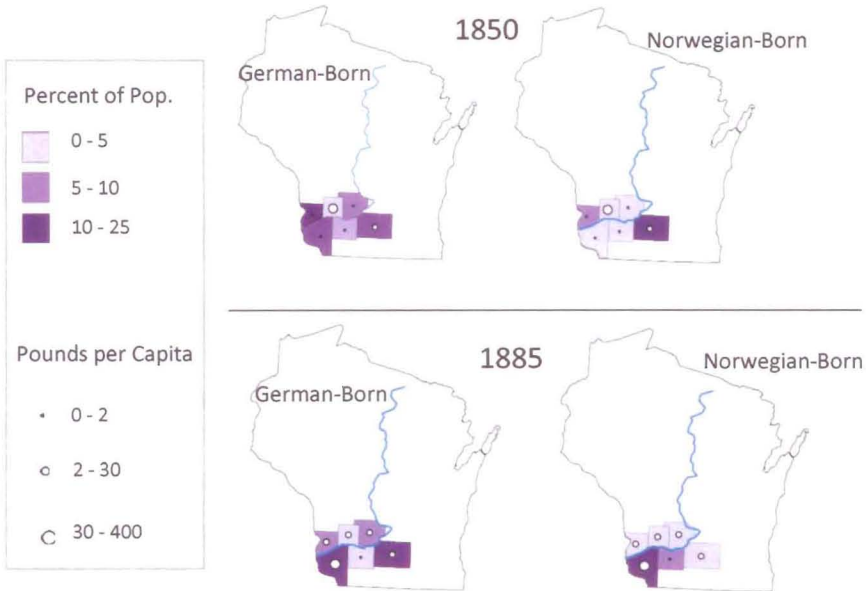


### 1885 Agricultural Data

Agricultural Products	Grant	Richland	Iowa	Sauk	Crawford	Dane
Improved Land in acres	10	10	10	7	6	15
Unimproved Land in acres	7	9	9	8	8	9
Wheat in bushels	7	11	9	32	13	17
Butter in pounds	55	36	53	58	23	65
Tobacco in pounds	8	15	9	9	4	402



### Comparison of Tobacco Production on the County Level



## **Dane County District Data**

To see the correlation between crops grown and ethnicity at the county level, the Norwegian population and tobacco production at the county level on the Lower Wisconsin River was mapped. (See Comparison of Tobacco Production at County Level) Since our secondary sources indicate that tobacco should be strongly grown by Norwegian-born farmers, the counties with the largest Norwegian populations should grow the most tobacco in 1885. However, Dane county, which grew the most tobacco in 1885 overall, shows a small percentage of Norwegians and a higher percentage of Germans. Richland County, the second highest tobacco-producing county in 1885 has a low percentage of both Norwegian and German-born farmers. However, Grant County, also a significant contributor to tobacco production, has a high percentage of both Germans and Norwegians in 1885. There are similar results when comparing wheat and butter production across time. Therefore, it is difficult to determine any ethnic trends related to the type of agricultural production at the county level. In order to locate any correlations between ethnicity and type of agricultural production, both population and agricultural data was needed at a smaller, more local scale.

Dane county was the case study instead of other counties because Dane county was the only county in the 1850 data that had a system of dividing the county into smaller units. No other county could be divided into smaller units using the 1850 agricultural census. Dane county also had one of the higher German and Norwegian populations. (See population charts above in immigration data) As stated earlier, there were certain towns within Dane county that had significant German or Norwegian populations. Roxbury and Cross Plains had a higher German population, while Stoughton and Cottage Grove had a higher Norwegian population. Yet, agriculture data cannot be given for specific towns because districts divide the data. The towns

Roxbury and Cross Plains were put into District 37 and the towns Stoughton and Cottage Grover were put into District 7. However, there is a list of which towns fall within each district. The list also gives page numbers to identify the towns within the data, but the page numbers are not correct.

The graphs showing the number of units for Dane County were set at every 50,000 in 1850, every 100,000 in 1870, and every 500,000 in 1885. Without setting the graphs, it would be very difficult to compare the different districts. For example, Dane County has 12,167,000 pounds of tobacco in 1885. (Casson, 1885) If the 1885 graph showed the actual number of tobacco in Dane county, the number of pounds of tobacco would dwarf any other numbers of crops. The rest of the numbers would all fall under one category of less than a million pounds. This would not show the differences among the other crops.

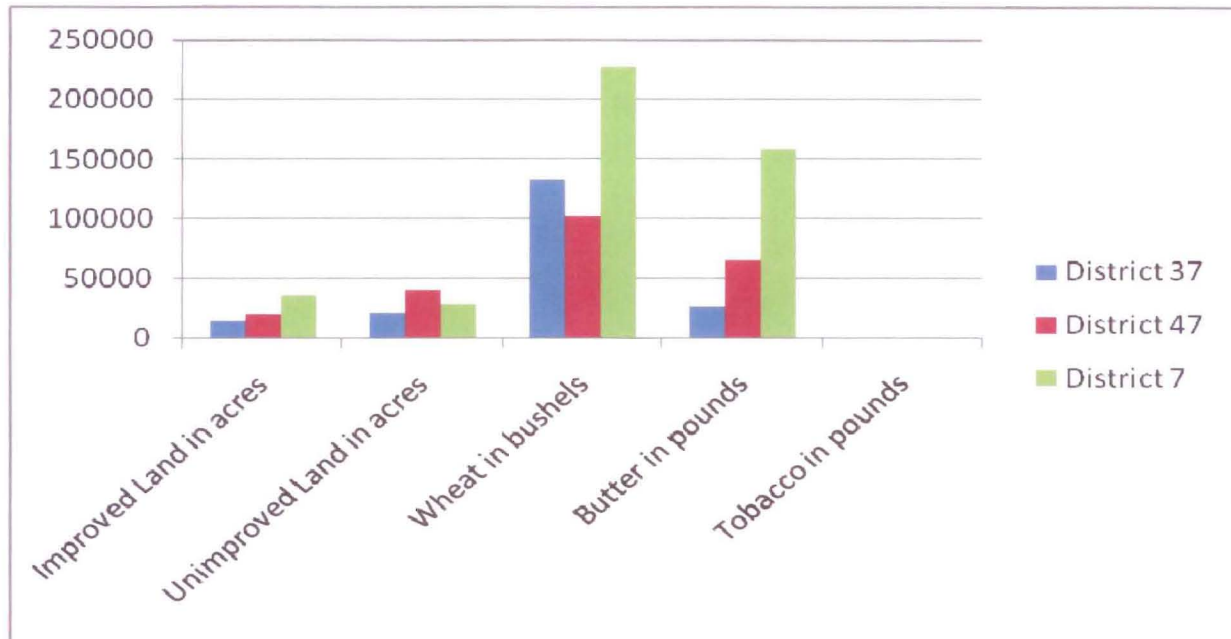
### **Comparing Dane County District Data**

The main difference between the districts is an increase in tobacco production in 1870 and 1885 in the Norwegian district. Similar to the overall Dane county data, there was switch in the Norwegian District (District 7) between wheat and tobacco as the major crop. In 1850, there is no tobacco production in Dane County. Instead District 7 produced over 200,000 bushels of wheat, which is double the amount of other districts. As the Norwegian population rises to 6,560 people in 1870, the tobacco production soars to over 800,000 pounds. (US Census, 1870) Finally, in 1885 tobacco production passes over 2.5 million pounds. (Casson, 1885) The Norwegian District is the only district that shows tobacco production in 1870. (US Census, 1870) Other districts become the lead in wheat, while the Norwegian District produces mainly tobacco.

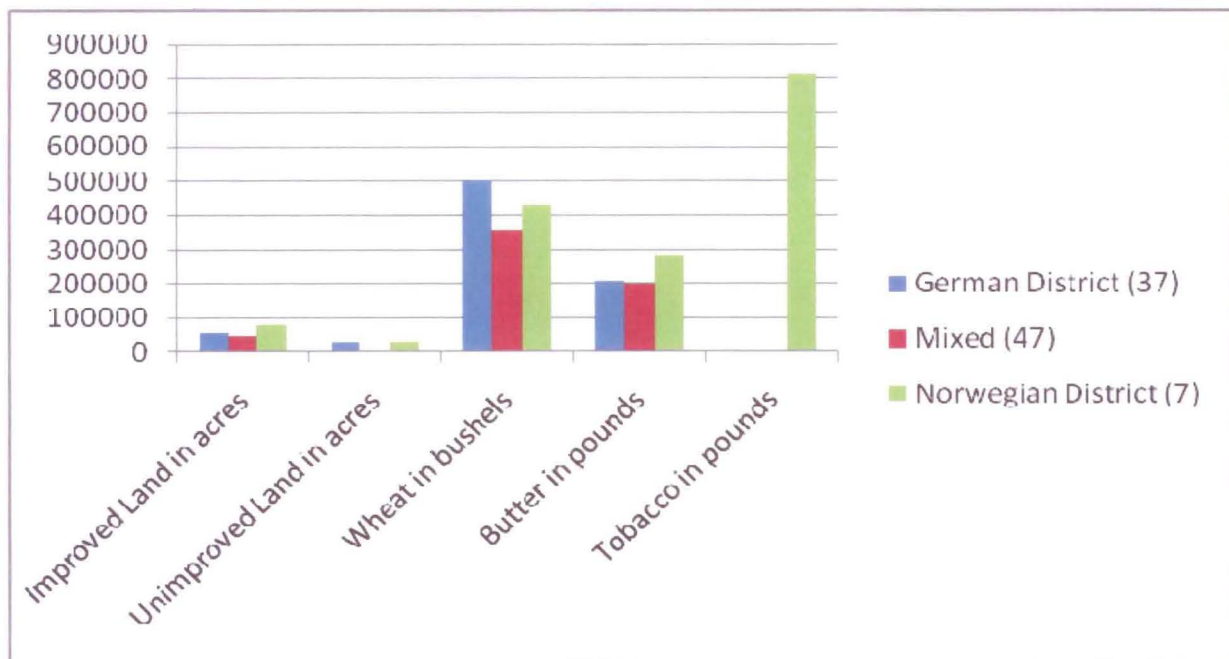
The production of butter is also higher in the Norwegian District than in other districts. However, the difference is not as extreme as with the case of tobacco. There is a consistent rise

of the production of butter for all the districts. Butter production is a sign of diversified farming. As tobacco production increased, more manure from cows would be needed to fertilize the soil.

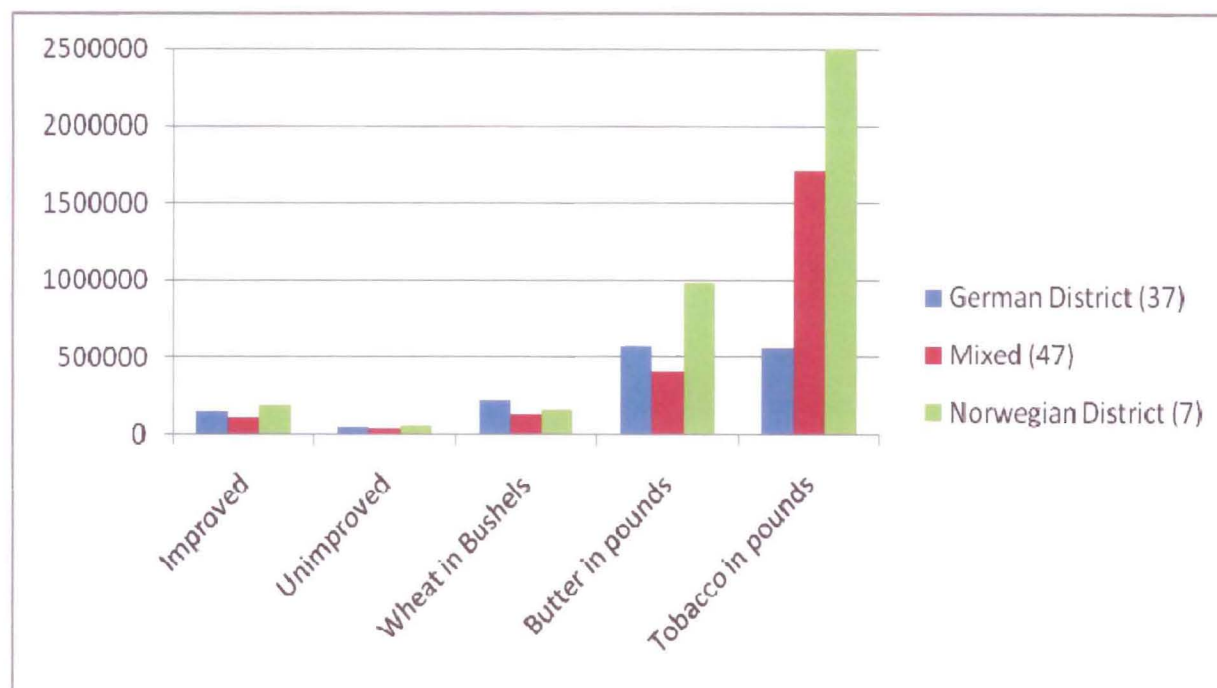
1850 District Data for Dane County



1870 District Data for Dane County



1885 District Data for Dane County



## CONCLUSION

Multiple push pull factors caused mass migration for both Norwegians and Germans to Wisconsin between 1850 and 1885. The Lower Wisconsin River area was not a main area for settlement for either Germans or Norwegians. Norwegians settled the mostly around Lake Koshkonong and Upper Mississippi River bordering Minnesota. The majority of Germans settled along the Lake Michigan shore and in the Fox River Valley area. Because the Lower Wisconsin River was not the main area of settlement for these ethnic groups, differences between these two ethnic groups was harder to determine.

At the county level, the main agricultural difference was the production of tobacco in Dane County. Dane county had one of the highest concentrations of Germans and Norwegians in the area of the Lower Wisconsin River. Throughout Wisconsin, Norwegians learned tobacco production practices, while working as hired laborers and began to grow tobacco on their own

farms. However, it is difficult compare how much tobacco Norwegians grew using only county level data because Norwegians populations are absorbed into the total population. (See map of Comparison of Tobacco Production on a County Level below)

To better examine tobacco production by Norwegians, Dane County was chosen as a necessary case study. At the local district level, the significant difference of tobacco production between ethnicities becomes clearer. In 1870 and 1885, the Norwegian District (District 7) has a higher production of tobacco than do the other districts combined.

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