

Some National Groups in Minnesota

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MINNESOTA'S POPULATION has been a mixed one from the earliest years of exploration and settlement.¹ With the French explorers were men of other nationalities, including a few Negroes. The Pembina settlement was composed of English, French, Swiss, and mixed-bloods. The soldiers and settlers at Fort Snelling and Mendota were a cosmopolitan lot, and from the 1840's to the present the main streams of immigration to the state have had their sources in a multitude of nations and regions.

The problem of definition is raised immediately when one speaks of the national groups of Minnesota. I have chosen to interpret the term somewhat broadly to include all groups, whether national, racial, or regional, which have demonstrated distinct characteristics and some measure of internal group-cohesiveness and self-consciousness. Thus, in addition to the nationalities like the German or Norwegian, and races like the Negro or Mongolian, it is defensible to include the New Englanders as a group, for they possess most attributes of the national groups, except original non-American citizenship. Other American regional groups represented in Minnesota's population are perhaps not sufficiently distinctive to warrant inclusion in the general definition, although a case certainly could be made for the Pennsylvania Germans.

The great era of the occupation of Minnesota was from the 1840's to the 1880's. Before 1840 there were traders, missionaries, and soldiers in what is now the state, but they were relatively few in number. Some elements of the population came after the 1880's, but the main movement occurred in the previous two-score years.

By the 1830's the westward-moving American frontier was rounding the southern end of Lake Michigan, and people from New England and the Old Northwest were pushing northwestward into the rich Wisconsin lands. Minnesota lay in the path of "manifest destiny." In 1851, at Traverse des Sioux and Pembina, the Indians were swept by treaties from western Minnesota, and the only legal obstacle to settlement was removed.

There were many reasons for the northwestward thrust of the American frontier. One was the great hunger for good farming lands, felt by

¹This is a revised version of an address, given in a series of Centennial "Aquino Lectures," at the College of St. Thomas in St. Paul on March 15, 1949. *Ed.*

both natives and foreign-born immigrants. There were rich opportunities for capital investment in timberlands, millsites, townsites, and transportation projects. Steamboats and railroads were penetrating the new area. There were promotional activities of many kinds, by both the territorial and state governments through immigration commissions, by railroads, land companies, churches, and other organizations. The Minnesota country was publicized in newspapers, both in English and in foreign languages. Thousands upon thousands of letters were written by pioneers to friends and relatives in eastern cities and in Europe — the “America letters” or Minnesota letters.

Two passages that reflect the boom spirit of the Minnesota region may be quoted. One was published by James M. Goodhue in the first issue of his *Minnesota Pioneer* on April 18, 1849: “A description of the village [St. Paul] now would not answer for a month hence — such is the rapidity of building and the miraculous resurrection of every description of domicils. Piles of lumber and building materials lie scattered everywhere in admirable confusion. The whole town is on the stir — stores, hotels, houses, are projected and built in a few days. California is forgotten, and the whole town is rife with the exciting spirit of advancement.”

The second is drawn from a promotional pamphlet of the 1860's, now in the collection of the Minnesota Historical Society: “The dryness of the air, the character of the soil, which retains no stagnant pools to send forth poisonous exhalations, the universal purity of its water, the beauty of its scenery, and the almost total absence of fog or mist; the brilliancy of its sunlight, the pleasing succession of the seasons, all conspire to give Minnesota a climate of unrivalled salubrity, and to make this the home of a joyous, healthy, prosperous people, strong in physical, intellectual, and moral capabilities. And while chilly, damp winds from the Atlantic are sowing broadcast the seeds of that terrible disease, pulmonary consumption; while the malarious exhalations from the undrained soil of Indiana, Illinois, and other States of the southern Mississippi Valley, yield an annual harvest of fevers, — Minnesota enjoys an almost entire immunity from both. If fever and ague occur, the germ was imported; if consumption claims its victim, the cause is to be sought elsewhere than in the climate of Minnesota.”²

NEW ENGLANDERS were among the more numerous of Minnesota's pioneers and they certainly left an indelible stamp of character and institutions upon the region. The New England settlements in Minnesota

² J. A. Willard, *Blue Earth County: Its Advantages to Settlers*, 9 (Mankato, 1868).

were an extension of the belt of New England colonies running westward from the North Atlantic states across New York, Ontario, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin. The primary interest of the group was more commercial and industrial than agricultural, with a special interest in the lumber industry. New Englanders were also virtually ubiquitous as townsite organizers, millowners, and traders.

Although the immigration of the New Englanders was primarily by individuals and families, there was some organized community migration. An example was the Northampton colony at Chanhasen in Carver County, founded by the Reverend Freeman Nutting of South Hadley Falls, Massachusetts, who made a trip to Minnesota for his health in 1851. On his return he published in the *Northampton Courier* of September 28, 1852, a letter printed under the heading "Minnesota Territory. — A Colony! Who will go?" With the help of the Reverend Henry M. Nichols and others, there was organized the "Minnesota Claim Association," each member being entitled to make a claim of not more than 160 acres of land to be explored and selected by advance agents of the association. The members migrated westward as a unit, and arrived in St. Paul on April 19, 1853. There the group split on differences of opinion as to the most desirable place to settle. Nutting, in a letter sent back to the *Courier*, reported: "But the Colony, numbering about one hundred men, after having traveled fifteen hundred miles together, and when within fifteen miles of the place selected by their Agent, suddenly and unaccountably broke up and scattered, and all but three refused to go to the place selected for them." The place chosen was in the Cannon River Valley, which was heavily settled by New Englanders. But many of the group preferred lands south of Lake Minnetonka, especially in Chanhasen Township of Carver County. The corporate character of the enterprise was not preserved beyond the original migration to Minnesota from New England.³

A New England Society of the Northwest was organized for social purposes in 1856, and its first anniversary was celebrated at a festival dinner in the Cataract Hotel of Minneapolis on December 22, 1857. Twelve columns of the *Falls Evening News* of December 29, 1857, were devoted to the event. The last of the evening's toasts was to "New England and each of the New England states, and Minnesota. May she imitate the heroic virtues of her foster mother, till New England industry, New England enterprise, and New England thrift shall build here a glorious

³ Charles W. Nichols, "New Light on the Northampton Colony," in *Minnesota History*, 22:169-173 (June, 1941).

super-structure of education and Gospel truth, till Sabbath bells shall echo from hill-top to hill-top, and forests now untrodden shall be filled with the murmur of the common school, ensuring the intelligence and integrity of our people, and making the land we live in like the land we left."

The leadership of New Englanders in the fields of education and charitable work in the early years of Minnesota's history was especially noteworthy. Many of the founders of the University of Minnesota were of New England origin. New Englanders established Carleton College, and its chief early benefactor, whose name the college bears, was a Charlestown resident. Few early educational and charitable enterprises in the territory and state were started and maintained without New Englanders at or near the helm. Business leadership, devotion to religion, enthusiasm for education and for improving the condition of the underprivileged mark the New England settlers of Minnesota.

The IRISH have been among the most colorful of the state's national groups. Nearly thirteen thousand people of Irish birth, who had come in during the 1850's along with other immigrants, could be counted in Minnesota by 1860. Their numbers were almost doubled in the following decade. Although most of the Irish became farmers, many turned to labor in the lumber camps and in the rising towns, and many helped build the state's railroads. Since they spoke English, they were quickly assimilated into the native-born population.

The welfare of these newly arrived thousands was the special concern of the Catholic church. Efforts were made by the clergy to attract Irish immigrants to Minnesota, not only directly from Ireland but also from eastern urban centers, such as Boston. For this purpose Bishop Thomas L. Grace in 1864 founded a Minnesota Irish Emigration Society, which seems to have had limited success as compared to the organization formed by Bishop John Ireland in 1876. The latter group was the Catholic Colonization Bureau of Minnesota, a joint stock enterprise, with Dillon O'Brien, editor of the *Northwestern Chronicle*, a Catholic weekly, as secretary. He had arrived in the United States in the 1840's, worked in the eastern states and Michigan, and finally came to Minnesota in 1863 with his family of six children. In 1865 he started work with the *Northwestern Chronicle*, and after 1875 he became closely associated with the dynamic Bishop Ireland, with whom he worked until his death in 1882. Bishop Ireland and O'Brien negotiated with the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad for lands in twelve townships of Swift County, to be sold at

\$1.75 to \$3.50 per acre. The railroad kept title until the land was sold, and the colonization bureau received a profit above the railroad price. In 1880 Bishop Ireland contracted with the Manitoba Railroad for fifty thousand acres, and he made similar arrangements with other lines. The bureau helped to establish Irish colonies at Adrian in Nobles County, at Collis in Traverse County, at Avoca, Fulda, and Iona in Murray County, at Ghent in Lyon County, and at Graceville and Barry in Big Stone County.⁴

To aid and advise the large numbers of Irish immigrants pouring through Chicago, there was organized in 1879, by Bishops John Spalding, Ireland, and James O'Connor, the Irish Colonization Association. The Minnesota settlement most helped by this organization was Adrian in Nobles county. The Reverend J. P. Bodfish was credited with its success, for he brought with him fifty families from the Boston area, and he seems to have been an efficient administrator. Bishop Ireland's Catholic Colonization Bureau helped the Adrian settlement by obtaining land for it from the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad Company.

The Sweetman colony of Currie in Murray County was among the better-known groups promoted from Ireland itself. Its organizer, John Sweetman, a wealthy landholder of County Meath, came to the United States in 1880 and visited many part of the country. In St. Paul he called at the Catholic Colonization Bureau, and through Bishop Ireland went to see the Irish settlements in Murray County. He was pleased with the prospects and purchased land. On his return to Dublin, Sweetman organized, in March, 1881, the Irish American Colonization Company, Ltd. Any man twenty-one years of age or over, married, and recommended by a parish priest as being of good character was eligible. Land was sold for four dollars an acre, of which forty cents was the company's profit. A house and farm implements were to be provided at a total cost of \$250.00. Under this arrangement, forty families were sent to Currie in 1882. Unfortunately, the men were not good farmers, and Sweetman lost a good deal of money on the venture.

Another humanitarian enterprise was that promoted by Father James Nugent of Liverpool, who interested a philanthropist named James H. Tuke in financing the transportation of several hundred of the poorest families in Connemara and western Ireland to Graceville in Big Stone

⁴H. E. Egan, "Irish Immigration to Minnesota, 1865-1890," in *Mid-America*, 12:133-166, 223-245 (October, 1929, January, 1930); Sister Mary E. Henthorne, *The Irish Catholic Colonization Association of the United States*, 103-129 (Champaign, 1932); W. J. Onahan, "A Chapter of Catholic Colonization" in *Acta et Dicta*, 5:67-77 (July, 1917); Thomas D. O'Brien, "Dillon O'Brien," in *Acta et Dicta*, 6:35-53 (October, 1933); Alice E. Smith, "The Sweetman Irish Colony," in *Minnesota History*, 9:331-346 (December, 1928).

County. Like Sweetman's this venture of the early 1880's was an unfortunate one, for the Connemaras were not equipped to cope with the rigors of the American frontier. A large number soon drifted away to less strenuous environments.

Other Irish colonies were organized by General James Shields, who brought a group from Illinois to Shieldsville, near Faribault, in 1857-58; and by Bishop Ireland and O'Brien, who established the De Graff settlement in Swift County in 1879. Because they lacked capital, the Irish were drawn into areas like St. Paul, where work was immediately available, but they eventually distributed themselves throughout the state, in farming areas as well as in towns and cities. They brought into Minnesota the first large membership for the Catholic churches. As elsewhere, they took to politics with avidity, and generally contributed a witty, brawny, colorful, and dynamic population stock to the new state.

Of the early groups migrating to Minnesota from abroad, the GERMANS came in the largest numbers. By the time the Minnesota country was open to settlement, German immigration to the Middle West was in full swing. Some of these people came upriver from New Orleans and St. Louis, but most of them moved westward through New York or Quebec, by way of the Great Lakes to Milwaukee or Chicago, and thence to Minnesota. Theirs was predominantly a family migration, and many brought some capital with them. The proportions of Catholics and Protestants among the Germans is difficult to determine, but there were large numbers of both. With certain exceptions, theirs was not an organized colonization enterprise. In general, the Germans sought good farm land, with an adequate supply of wood and access to a navigable stream. The heaviest concentrations of these people in the pioneer period were therefore in the Minnesota and upper Mississippi River valleys. The Germans were inclined to settle in clusters in order to be near other German-speaking people who could join in the organization of parishes or congregations.⁵ The thesis set forth by the late Professor Marcus Lee Hansen that the Germans tended to be the "fillers in" behind the cutting edge of the frontier, does not seem to be very well borne out in Minnesota, for in this state many of the pioneer German settlements were on the raw frontier itself. The Germans were superb farmers and efficient

⁵ Hildegard Binder Johnson, "The Distribution of the German Pioneer Population in Minnesota," in *Rural Sociology*, 6:16-34 (March, 1941), "Factors Influencing the Distribution of the German Pioneer Population in Minnesota," in *Agricultural History*, 19:39-57 (January, 1945), "Inter-marriages Between German Pioneers and Other Nationalities in Minnesota in 1860 and 1870," in *American Journal of Sociology*, 51:279-304 (January, 1946).

business people. Of course they varied greatly, according to their place of origin in Germany, and the term "German" is somewhat meaningless. This is especially true when one realizes that it was applied to other nationalities, such as the Swiss, the Schleswig Danes, the Poles, and others.

The Germans, according to one authority, did not seem to have any special genius for selecting the best lands, as has been claimed, but their skill in farming frequently gave them an advantage over neighbors of other nationalities. There also seems to be little support for the myth that the Germans settled in Minnesota because the land there was like that in the homeland, although this idea does appear in the propaganda issued to attract Germans to Minnesota. Gradually, these people distributed themselves throughout the state, with the heaviest concentrations in the east-central and southern counties.

Among the many interesting German settlements were those about New Ulm and in Stearns County. The New Ulm settlement combined the familiar processes of frontier settlement with organized colony procedure.⁶ The colony was initiated by Frederick Beinhorn, an immigrant of 1852 from Braunschweig, who organized the Chicago Land Society for the purpose of establishing a colony in the West. After an unsuccessful search for land in other regions, the society found in the Minnesota Valley suitable land to which the earliest group migrated in 1854. Its members spent the first winter at an Indian village near the present site of New Ulm, and in the spring of 1855 they surveyed and laid out the townsite which was named New Ulm. By the time the adjoining region was organized as Brown County in 1856, the Chicago Land Society was in financial difficulties and was unable to buy the land which then went on the market. At that point another organization appeared and saved the day. This was the socialistic Turner Settlement Association of Cincinnati, the agents of which purchased the New Ulm townsite claims for six thousand dollars on June 2, 1856. The leading spirit of this enterprise was the idealistic William Pfaender, one of the many utopian socialists who came to the United States from Germany during the political disturbances of 1848. Under his energetic leadership, the New Ulm settlement became the German Land Association of New Ulm, and a planned community came into being on the banks of the Minnesota. Pfaender was notably successful in establishing a permanent German community, even though the German Land Association went out of existence after

⁶ Alice Felt Tyler, "William Pfaender and the Founding of New Ulm," in *Minnesota History*, 30:24-35 (March, 1949); Hildegard Binder Johnson, "The Founding of New Ulm," in *American German Review*, 12:8-12 (June, 1946).

May, 1859. The high intellectual background of many of the settlers, their many and varied cultural activities, the liberalism of the Turners, and the almost exclusively German population made of New Ulm one of the most interesting and attractive of Minnesota's pioneer settlements. The disastrous Sioux Outbreak of 1862 damaged and retarded the settlement seriously, but New Ulm was rebuilt and it continues today to bear the stamp of its founders.

The Stearns County German Catholic settlements were largely the result of the labors of a pioneer missionary, Father Francis Pierz, who was persuaded by Bishop Frederic Baraga to leave his native Austria and go to America as a missionary to the Indians.⁷ Backed by funds from Catholic organizations in Austria and Bavaria, he left for America in 1835. After working among the Indians and the pioneers of the Great Lakes region, he came to Minnesota in 1852 on the invitation of Bishop Joseph Cretin and proceeded at once to the Crow Wing area. Finding some German settlers there, he organized parishes at Sauk Rapids, Swan River, Belle Prairie, St. Cloud, St. Joseph, Augusta, and other places. In 1856 he was instrumental in attracting a group of Benedictine monks from Pennsylvania to Stearns County, where they founded St. John's Abbey. German Catholic immigration to the area soon increased, members of the non-Catholic minority tended to move out, and, as a result, the early settlements in the county were almost exclusively German. The Stearns County settlements were among the most successful enterprises inaugurated by continental missionary societies that were anxious to do for the Germans what certain Catholic missionary societies and prelates had done for the Irish. It was, however, the enterprise of such individuals as Father Pierz and of the Benedictines that was decisive.

A large proportion of the German settlers in Minnesota were Protestants, especially Lutheran. One reads of "solid settlements of German Lutherans," mostly from Prussia. The earliest German Lutheran missionaries came to Minnesota about 1855, congregations were organized, and by 1862 an Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Minnesota was formed. Many local congregations, however, affiliated with the larger Missouri Synod and with the synods of Ohio, Iowa, and other states. German Reformed and German Methodist congregations also were organized by Protestant groups.⁸ The Germans in general brought to Minnesota skill

⁷ Sister Grace McDonald, "Father Francis Pierz, Missionary," and A. C. Krey, "Monte Cassino, Metten, and Minnesota," in *Minnesota History*, 8:217-231, 10:107-125 (September, 1927, June, 1929).

⁸ Esther A. Selke, *The Beginnings of the German Lutheran Churches in Minnesota* (St. Louis, 1929-30), and "Pioneers of German Lutheranism in Minnesota," in *Minnesota History*, 14:45-58 (March, 1933).

as farmers, genuine business aptitude, strong religious organizations, a rich cultural life, and the knowledge of how to live well.

The SCANDINAVIANS of Minnesota have attracted attention in proportion to their large numbers. This is appropriate, for these people settled in almost every part of the state, making Fredrika Bremer's descriptive phrase, "a glorious new Scandinavia," a reality within a generation after her visit in 1850. In 1860 there were nearly eight and a half thousand people of Norwegian birth in the state; a generation later there were over a hundred thousand. In the same period the number of Swedish-born Minnesotans increased from about three thousand to almost a hundred thousand. The Danes were relatively few in comparison, but their increase was proportionately rapid. The Scandinavian-born people of Minnesota composed in 1890 nearly half of the state's total population.⁹

Although similar in character, the three Scandinavian group migrations were separate and distinct, and so were their settlements in Minnesota. The Norwegians and the Swedes began coming into the state at about the same time, in the early 1850's, and the Danes arrived a little later. Like other immigrants to Minnesota, the Scandinavian pioneers came first from previously established Norwegian and Swedish settlements in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa. Then, as the railroads reached the state, the immigrants came directly from the Scandinavian countries to Minnesota.

Like the Germans, the Scandinavians were attracted to Minnesota by good land and the availability of wood and water. They possessed relatively little capital, and after 1862 they made full use of the Homestead Law. Most of them were of the Lutheran faith. The majority were from the small farmer and cotter classes of the homelands. A large proportion were literate, though relatively few had any substantial educational background. Scandinavian immigration was predominantly in family units. Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes came to secure for themselves independent freeholds in the American West.

The areas of Norwegian settlement in Minnesota were fairly well defined within twenty-five years after the first Norwegians came to the territory in 1851. They first settled largely in the southeastern corner of the territory, where the densest Norwegian settlements were in Houston,

⁹ Carlton C. Qualey, *Norwegian Settlement in the United States*, 97-129 (Northfield, 1938); George M. Stephenson, "Sidelights on the History of the Swedes in the St. Croix Valley," in *Minnesota History*, 17:396-405 (December, 1936); Thomas P. Christensen, "Danish Settlement in Minnesota," in *Minnesota History*, 8:363-385 (December, 1927). See also Theodore C. Blegen's two-volume work on *Norwegian Migration to America* (Northfield, 1931, 1940).

Fillmore and Goodhue counties. There were extensive settlements also in Mower, Freeborn, and Faribault counties along the Iowa border, and in the next tier of counties northward — Olmsted, Dodge, Steele, Waseca, and Blue Earth.

From this southeastern area, settlement moved northwestward after the Sioux Uprising into the Big Woods region extending from the great bend of the Minnesota River northward into Stearns County. These settlements in turn led into the Park Region. By 1870, thanks to the publicity given to the scouting expedition of the Norwegian newspaper correspondent, Paul Hjelm-Hansen, the Norwegians were entering the fertile valley of the Red River. The upper Minnesota River Valley also was heavily settled by Norwegians. Relatively few of these people settled in southwestern Minnesota, partly because of prejudice against prairie land, and even fewer settled in the Arrowhead region and in the St. Croix Valley.

The Swedish settlers, on the other hand, were concentrated largely in the region between the Mississippi and the St. Croix, especially in Washington and Chisago counties. The Swedes were initially attracted to this area by letters, like those of A. M. Dahlhjelm. Disillusioned by a colony promoted by Peter Cassel in Jefferson County, Iowa, Dahlhjelm had learned of the Chisago Lake region in 1851 from a friend who in turn was a refugee from the Bishop Hill colony in Illinois. Dahlhjelm's letters were sent to relatives in Sweden in 1853 and were published in a Linköping newspaper in July, 1857. In one letter he reported that Chisago Lake contained huge quantities of fish, that game of all kinds abounded, and that the woods were full of berries. "One species of berry," he wrote, "has a flavor like that of the finest liquor." Others who wrote letters about the region included the influential Gustav Unonius. Svante Cron-sioe, publisher of the Illinois Swedish-language newspaper, *Den Swenske Republikanen i Norra Amerika*, also drew settlers to the St. Croix region, for after visiting it in 1857, he ran a series of articles giving full information about it and providing a map of Minnesota as a supplement. Another substantial settlement of Swedes was in Goodhue County, while all the central Minnesota counties received large numbers of Swedish settlers.

The Danes were heavily concentrated in only two areas — Freeborn and Steele counties to the south and Lincoln County on the South Dakota border. Their first large settlement was at Clark's Grove in Freeborn County in the 1860's. Otherwise they were thinly distributed in the same general area settled by the Norwegians, especially in the Park Re-

gion. Askov in Pine County was established by the Danish People's Society in 1906.

The Scandinavians were among the more rapidly assimilated of the immigrant groups in the state. From an early date they took part in local and state politics. As the Scandinavian stock in the state grew to huge proportions, many of these people settled in towns and cities, especially in Minneapolis. By the turn of the century, the Scandinavian settlements had become firmly rooted. They contributed a sturdy, hard-working, intelligent, and independent people to the Minnesota region.

Beginning in 1864, Minnesota attracted FINNISH settlers, at first from the older settlements in Michigan and Wisconsin, and then directly from the homeland. A scattering of settlers in the north central counties in the period from 1864 to 1890 was followed by a much heavier migration to the Arrowhead region, especially St. Louis County. Why did they go there? Lacking money they were drawn to familiar occupations in the lumber camps and mines, and to the cheap cut-over lands. By the time the Finns came to Minnesota, the good lands elsewhere in the state were largely taken. Many of the early comers were from the mining districts of Finland, and they naturally were attracted by the newly developed iron region. By the beginning of World War I, the Minnesota Finns constituted a large and self-conscious group, intensely proud of their nationality, strongly tinged with belief in the co-operative way of conducting business, somewhat clannish, extremely hard-working, and physically rugged. They have formed a distinct national group which has lost less of its individuality than many of the others.¹⁰

Another small but self-conscious national group in Minnesota is composed of CZECHS or Bohemians. Numbers of Czechs, especially members of religious groups like the Hussites and the Moravian Brethren, were attracted to America by publicity on the state distributed by its immigration board. In 1858 a small group of Czechs who had stopped for a time at Milwaukee heard of good lands available in Minnesota. They set out and chose land in a heavily wooded area of McLeod County. In 1859 more Czech families came. The settlers survived the Sioux attacks by barricading themselves, and thereafter there was a steady immigration of Czech families. The center of the settlement came to be the village of Silver Lake. The Czech language, customs, churches, and traditions have survived in this community to the present. Czechs also settled in Rice

¹⁰ John I. Kolehmainen, "The Finnish Pioneers of Minnesota," in *Minnesota History*, 25:317-328 (December, 1944).

and Steele counties and in St. Paul. Both the Catholic and Protestant churches are represented among them. Though relatively few in number, the Czechs have contributed a highly intelligent and energetic strain to Minnesota's population, and they are among the best assimilated of all nationalities.¹¹

Unusual in character were the GERMAN MENNONITES who came to Minnesota from Russia. About fifteen thousand of these people came to America between 1873 and 1880, driven by fear of Russification and attracted by the advantages of the United States. In 1872 three representatives of the Mennonites crossed the Atlantic, and the next year twelve more arrived. Upon visiting Minnesota, they met William Seeger, state treasurer and secretary of the state board of immigration. A German immigrant who had spent fourteen years in Russia and who for a time had been associated with Pfaender in New Ulm, Seeger was especially well qualified to meet the Mennonite delegation in St. Paul and conduct its members on a tour of the state. When in the same year thirty-five families came from Russia to the United States, it was Seeger who brought them to Minnesota and settled them on lands favored by the advance agents. The fact that Seeger's son owned a farm near Mountain Lake undoubtedly influenced the selection of that community for the Mennonite settlement. The pioneer settlers attracted others of their faith. It is estimated that about sixteen hundred of the fifteen thousand German Mennonite immigrants to the United States came to Minnesota, and most of these took lands in the vicinity of Mountain Lake.¹²

Large numbers of immigrants from eastern, central, and southern Europe came to Minnesota at about the turn of the century and later. Beginning in the 1880's, there was a steady immigration of POLISH people who settled primarily in urban areas, like the Twin Cities, Winona, and Duluth, but who also settled in farming regions like that about Silver Lake. They joined the ranks of Minnesota labor, were almost entirely Catholic in religion, and preserved strong loyalties to Polish traditions. A smaller group of Slovaks, arriving in the 1880's and later, was directed chiefly to the iron region of northern Minnesota. Some Russians and Ruthenians settled in the iron region as well, though more of them settled in the Twin Cities. Although there were Jews among the early Ger-

¹¹ Esther Jerabek, "The Transition of a New World Bohemia," in *Minnesota History*, 15:26-42 (March, 1934).

¹² Ferdinand P. Schultz, *A History of the Settlement of German Mennonites from Russia at Mountain Lake* (Minneapolis, 1938).

man and Czech immigrants to Minnesota, the majority of the Jewish immigrants came to Minnesota after 1880, largely from Russia and eastern Europe, and settled in the cities and towns. Among late comers who settled in urban centers were the Italians and Greeks.¹³

Special mention should be made of the immigration of ENGLISH families throughout the period of settlement. An interesting group enterprise of this nationality is the Fairmont colony in Martin County, established in 1872 under the leadership of H. F. Sherman. Because of their love of fox hunting, these settlers were known at the time as the "Fairmont Sportsmen."¹⁴

The two neighbor nations of the United States, Canada and Mexico, have contributed also to Minnesota's population. There is full evidence of the large-scale intermingling of the Canadian and American populations, and it is significant that some of Minnesota's leading citizens, including James J. Hill, were Canadian-born. There has been so little distinction between English-Canadians and Americans, that one scarcely thinks of them as a separate national group. The French-Canadian element, however, though a small one, has preserved its traditions down to the present day, and these people constitute one of the more self-conscious and proud groups in the state. The Mexicans came to Minnesota in response to the heavy demand for labor in the Twin Cities. They have not been numerous, but they have added strength and a picturesque quality to the state's population stocks.

There are many other groups in Minnesota's population as well, including Negroes, Japanese, Chinese, Latin Americans of various nationalities, Portuguese, Spanish, Hungarians, Rumanians, Ukrainians, Yugoslavs, Swiss, Dutch, Belgians, Armenians, Icelanders, Scotch, and Welsh, but space does not permit further description of the immigration of these smaller groups to Minnesota. Each of them has added to the cosmopolitan character of the population and has helped make of Minnesota virtually a commonwealth of nations.

There can be no question of the enormous part played by the nationality groups in the development of Minnesota's farming, industrial, and commercial life. With the exception of the New Englanders and some

¹³ Esther Jerabek, "The Expansion of Minnesota's Population," in *Minnesota Alumni Weekly*, 33:43 (September 23, 1933).

¹⁴ Arthur R. Moro, "The English Colony at Fairmont in the Seventies," in *Minnesota History*, 8:140-149 (March, 1927).

Germans, most of these newcomers were at the lowest economic level upon arrival, lacking capital, unfamiliar with American economic institutions, and retaining some lingering traditions of class stratification. Following years of hard labor, members of these groups gradually raised their standard of living. Their children, with better advantages than their parents had enjoyed, quickly shed the early feeling of inferiority and assumed an equal place with other members of the population. Today economic factors rather than national group differences account for variations in the standard of living. Without minimizing in the least the labors of the native-born American population of Minnesota—from the Old Northwest and other regions—it can be said truthfully that the tradition of hard work that characterized the background of millions of European farmers and laborers has become part of the tradition of the North Star State.

These immigrants came to Minnesota, as to other parts of America, to obtain economic independence, and they therefore tended to identify themselves with the American system of free enterprise. They believed wholeheartedly in private property and its accumulation. Except for the early years, when the Jacksonian tradition drew them into the Democratic party, they have with few exceptions been conservative politically, which means that they have voted the Republican ticket, beginning with a heavy vote for Lincoln in 1860. They did not flock into the Populist party, nor did they show enthusiasm for La Follette. Those who joined third-party movements in Minnesota did so for reasons unrelated to their national backgrounds. There has, of course, been the usual exception of the Democratic Irish, and research will doubtless reveal other aberrations, but the prevailing conservatism has been marked.

The same conservatism is to be seen in the religious groups. The strongly pietistic tinge of many of the early Protestant groups, the desire for a vital evangelical religion to help them cope with the rigors of frontier life, the intellectual leadership of the European-born, state church-trained clergy, and the deep religious needs of people in a strange land going through a transition from the old and secure to the new and uncertain—all these factors made for fundamentalism in religious beliefs. The churches, furthermore, were the principal agencies for the maintenance of the language and cultural traditions of the homelands, and they thus perpetuated the insulation of the immigrant groups from the native-American society and culture. Gradually all this changed, as later generations, trained in American schools, shed the old language and moved forth into full fellowship with people of all sects and back-

grounds. Nevertheless, the separatist tendencies still persist in many groups.

It is in the field of culture and the folk arts that the national groups of Minnesota have made their most colorful and unique contributions. Choral singing, food preparation, richly idiomatic immigrant-American speech and writing, immigrant literature, immigrant newspapers and magazines, folk ballads and heroes, and the strong belief of all groups in the benefits of the American way of life—these are but a few features. Much of this rich cultural heritage has been lost from generation to generation, but enough has been preserved to enable the citizens of Minnesota to recognize and appreciate it. Among the more active agencies that have helped preserve this heritage are the Folk Arts Foundation of America, with headquarters in Northfield, the International Institute of St. Paul, which sponsors triennially the justly famous Festival of Nations, the immigrant-American historical and cultural societies, and the century-old Minnesota Historical Society.

The feelings of thousands of settlers in the Minnesota country are well expressed in a verse from a favorite song of the Minnesota Finns:¹⁵

In Minnesota's wooded country
Is our beloved homeland,
With its hillocks of leafy spruce
Its nature suits us best.
On summer's eve, a beautiful scene
As crimson glistens the western sun,
More lovely yet than to hear
The matchless carol of the evening thrush.
Our song rings out, our song rings out, our song rings out,
To you, Minnesota!

¹⁵ This free translation of A. Tiikkainen's "Song of Minnesota," is given by Kolchmainen, above, 25:328n.



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