

Norwegian-American Settlement History in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan

The 16-week course, the “Norwegian-American Settlement History in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan”, is offered at a reasonable cost (minimum of \$25) to all interested in Norwegian-American heritage and history. Although intended for the District 5 of Sons of Norway members in the interest of promoting their heritage, this course is not limited to members. Scope of the class is the history of early settlements of Norwegian immigrants throughout Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan during the 1800’s with some discussion through 1917. A brief overall history of Norwegian-Americans in the United States is given in the first three weeks of the course. Three books and a DVD will be used in this course and are recommended for purchase.

FACULTY

Bill Injerd (Michigan)

Historian, The Norwegian Sloop Society of America
Publisher, *The Sloopers: Their Heritage and Posterity COLLECTORS EDITION (2014)*
Member, Norwegian-American Historical Association (NAHA)

Dave Johnson (Illinois)

President of the Norske Museum in Norway, Illinois
Author, various publications related to Illinois Norwegian-American history

Dana Kelly (Wisconsin)

Executive Director, The Norwegian-American Genealogy Center

Kirk Mies (Illinois)

Vice president of The Norwegian Sloop Society of America
Trustee, Vesterheim: The National Norwegian-American Museum and Heritage Center

Mike Palecek (Wisconsin)

Board Member, Sons of Norway District 5
Editor/author, *The First Norwegian Settlements in America*

Dave and Ruth Amundson (Wisconsin)

Founders, History Alive Project (Westby WI)

Jim Nelson (Indiana)

Historian, Norwegian-Americans in Indiana

FORMAT OF CLASSES

Duration of classes each week are scheduled to be 90 minutes long. They are offered both **Saturdays (9:00-10:30 am Central Time)** and **Mondays (6:30-8:00 pm Central Time)**, starting January 23 and ending May 15, 2021.

Lessons will be presented by faculty and guest speakers for the first 60-70 minutes. All classes will allow for time at the end for Discussion as well as Questions and Answers.

SUMMARY OF WEEKLY COURSES – Winter/Spring 2021**WEEK 1 January 23, 25**Instructor(s): Palecek, Injerd, Mies, Johnson,
Amundson*Summary of Norwegian-American History in USA: Part 1*

Because of discriminatory conditions in Norway during the late 1700s and early 1800s, many Norwegians began to look towards the young United States as a land of opportunity – a new life. Starting with the first immigrants in 1825 (“The Sloopers”), Norwegians immigrated to the United States, namely along the East Coast initially and later to Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Iowa. An estimated 1200 Norwegians had emigrated from Norway by 1840.

WEEK 2 January 30, February 1

Instructor(s): Palecek, Injerd, Mies, Johnson

Summary of Norwegian-American History in USA: Part 2

By 1860, nearly over 55,000 Norwegian immigrants have settled in the USA, mostly in the new Midwestern (“Northwest”) regions becoming available for homesteaders. Westward growth was strongest in Minnesota, Iowa, and the Dakotas. In the following years, even to the present times, more Norwegian immigrants moved further west to Montana, Idaho, the Pacific Northwest (Washington, Oregon), and California. To the South, Texas became one of the favorite states for Norwegians, starting in Bosque County.

WEEK 3 February 6, February 8

Instructor(s): Palecek, Injerd, Mies, Johnson,

Nelson

Summary of Norwegian-American History in USA: Part 3

We will wrap up the 3-week summary of Norwegian-American history in the USA with an overview of the scope of Weeks 4 through 14: Norwegian-American settlements in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan from 1825 to 1917. It is this week we will cover the details on the Norwegian settlements in Indiana, starting in 1835. The Book Report and Research Project will be introduced and explained -- to be completed and due by Easter and May 8, respectively.

WEEK 4 February 13, February 15

Instructor(s): Palecek, Injerd, Mies, Johnson

Early Norwegian-American History in Illinois

The first Norwegian immigrants settled for a short time in the upstate New York in 1825, then moved to the Fox River settlement north of Ottawa, Illinois, starting in 1834. From there, these early settlers (“Sloopers”), as well as new immigrants in coming years, migrated to other locales. The failed Beaver Creek settlement, following Rynning’s account of events, and early settlements in Chicago are explained.

WEEK 5 February 20, February 22

Instructor(s): Palecek, Injerd

Early Norwegian-American History in Wisconsin

As more of the Northwest Territory began to open to new settlers in the United States, a surge of Norwegian immigrants began settlements in Wisconsin, starting in 1838:

Jefferson Prairie, Rock Prairie, Koshkonong, and Muskego (near Milwaukee). The story of the nearly-failed and disease-ridden Muskego settlement will be discussed in some detail. From these settlements, more immigrants flowed to the north and northwest. This marks the beginning of a rich and still active heritage of Norwegian-Americans in Wisconsin.

WEEK 6 February 27, March 1

Instructor(s): Palecek

Norwegian-American History in southern & SE Wisconsin

The story of new Norwegian-American settlements continues in the southern parts of Wisconsin, joining the United States in 1848 as the 30th state. Stories on the settlements in Wiota, Dane County (Madison and Blue Mounds), and Columbia County will be presented. Discussion of the settled areas from Pine Lake to Indian Land: Ashippun & Pine Lake, Winchester, Indianlandet (Waupaca/Portage Counties), and Mount Morris.

WEEK 7 March 6, March 8

Instructor(s): Palecek, Injerd

Norwegian-American History in Wisconsin: Along Lake Michigan

We move towards Lake Michigan to study the Wisconsin settlements along the shore: Valders, Ephriam, and southern Door County. Discussion of Norwegian-American involvement of shipbuilding in Wisconsin through the years and the story of the 1871 Peshtigo Fire, the deadliest wildfire in recorded US history. Overview of the Norwegian-American role in Lake Michigan maritime commerce as ship pilots, sailors, disasters, life saving stations, and lighthouses.

WEEK 8 March 13, March 15

Instructor(s): Palecek, Amundson, Injerd

Norwegian-American History in SW Wisconsin

These Norwegian-American settlements in southwestern Wisconsin are covered in this lesson: Adams, Vernon, and Crawford Counties. We head a bit north and look at life in Black River Falls in Jackson County.

WEEK 9 March 20, March 22

Instructor(s): Palecek, Injerd, Mies

Norwegian-American History in: Western Wisconsin; Influences of Settlements in nearby Iowa and Minnesota

The influences of earlier Norwegian-American settlements to those just over the Mississippi River in Iowa and Minnesota and how these settlements became stepping stones to Norwegian-American settlements in Northwest Wisconsin will be discussed. We will be studying the first Norwegians to venture to Minnesota and Iowa, opening the area to later settlements in Winneshiek County (Decorah) and Clausen's Big Colony in Iowa as well as to Minnesota's Houston (Spring Grove), Fillmore Counties, and Goodhue Counties. Moving north along the Mississippi River in Wisconsin, we look at Rush River settlement in St. Croix County and these other counties: La Crosse, Trempealeau, and Buffalo. Discussion on Norwegian developments in dairying, terraced farming, and other innovations in agriculture.

WEEK 10 **March 27, March 29** Instructor(s): Palecek, Injerd
Norwegian-American History in the Wisconsin and Michigan Woods (“Pineries”):
In this lesson we’ll go to the Pineries in Chippewa Valley and view a video,
“Norwegians in the Pineries” by Glenn Borreson, and discuss Norwegian-American
involvement in lumbering in northern Wisconsin and Michigan.

******* April 3 is Easter weekend – NO CLASS *******

WEEK 11 **April 10, April 12** Instructor(s): Kelly, Injerd, Nelson
Discussion and Book Reports I – Waldemar Ager’s “Sons of the Old Country”
This week and next we will discuss Norwegian-American literature, with a special
focus on Waldemar Ager’s “Sons of the Old Country” – the book which all
participants who are giving a book report are expected to read. Injerd will briefly
review some of the novels by O.E. Rølvaag, Dorthea Dahl, and today’s popular
Lauraine Snelling (Red River of the North series). Kelly and Nelson will lead the
discussion on the “Sons of the Old Country”.

WEEK 12 **April 17, April 19** Instructor(s): Kelly, Nelson
Discussion and Book Reports II – Waldemar Ager’s “Sons of the Old Country”
This is a continuation of the discussion of Waldemar Ager’s “Sons of the Old
Country”, as it focuses on a fictional depiction of life in the Eau Claire (Chippewa
County) region of Wisconsin.

WEEK 13 **April 24, April 26** Instructor(s): Injerd
Norwegian-American History in Michigan
Starting in 1831 and 1848, Norwegians began settling in Michigan area: Monroe
County, Muskegon region, and north from there to Leelanau County. Further
settlements in Montcalm and Alpena Counties, as well as the Upper Peninsula and
Isle Royale will be presented and discussed.

WEEK 14 **May 1, May 2** Instructor(s): Palecek, Injerd, Mies, Johnson
Norwegian-American History: Other Topics of Interest and Intrigue
Wrapping up the lectures and studies on Norwegian-American history, we will look
at some of these topics of particular interest (subject to revision): Interesting stories in
history (letters, legends, interviews), Changes in transportation and markets for
goods, Changes in society due to language issues, religion, second- and third-
generation Norwegian-Americans, Urbanization, and notable Norwegian-Americans
many are familiar. We will summarize the course and answer any questions many of
you have.

WEEK 15 **May 8, May 10** Instructor(s): Injerd
Presentations of Research Projects: Part 1
The first group of two or three Research Projects will be presented and discussed.

WEEK 16* May 15, May 17

Instructor(s): Injerd

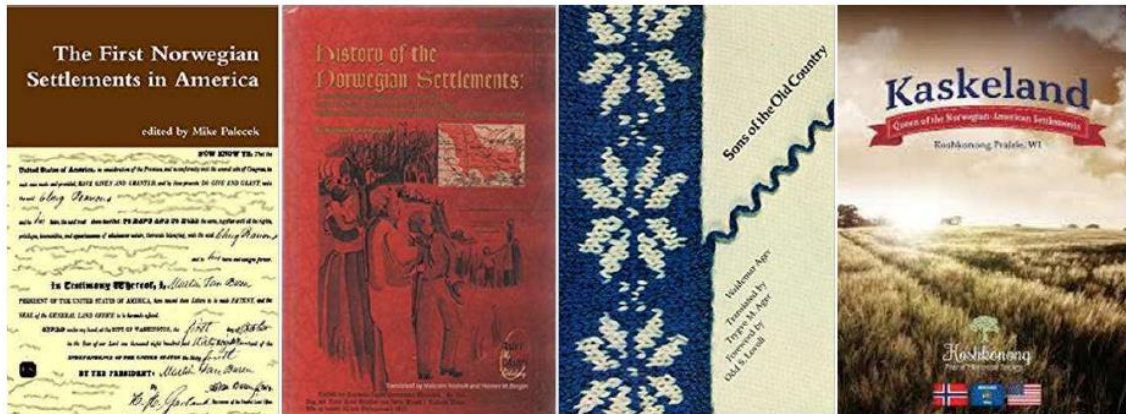
Presentations of Research Projects: Part 2

The remaining group of Research Projects will be presented and discussed.

***Note: Syttende Mai weekend is May 14-16**

BOOKS AND MATERIALS USED IN COURSE

It is recommended that these books and video be purchased for the course, to get the most out of it.



- Palecek, Mike (ed.). *The First Norwegian Settlements in America*. Racine, WI: Lulu Press, 2018.
- Holand, Hjalmar Rued. *History of the Norwegian Settlements*. Waukon, IA: Astri My Astri Publishing, 2006.
- Ager, Waldemar. *Sons of the Old Country*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1983.
- Kaskeland DVD. Koshkonong Prairie Historical Society.