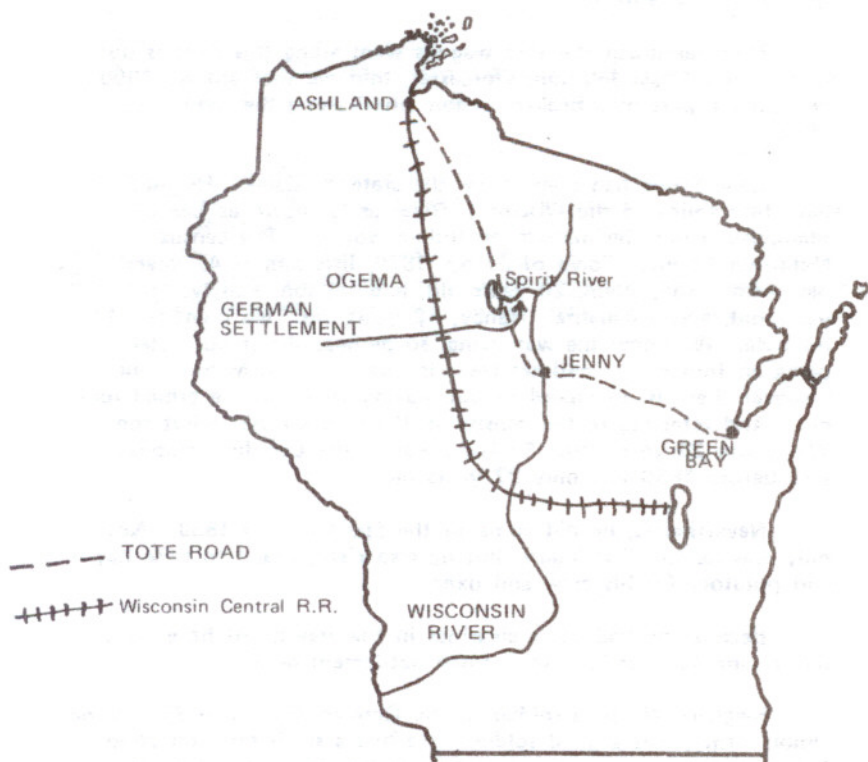


GERMAN SETTLEMENT HISTORY



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Published By
CLARE'S CRANNY

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In writing the history of the German Settlement it is necessary to bring out several things that had a bearing on establishing the Settlement.

First is the fact that before 1860 there was a trail from Green Bay to Washburn that came right through the Settlement. By 1860 most of this trail was used as a tote road. This tote road is sometimes erroneously referred to as a military road, but it was never used by the U.S. Army.

Isaac Stone must have discovered the large white pine timber along the Spirit River while traveling this road. And we also find the first homestead filed in what is now Price County, in 1867 by Sam Ward SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$; Sec. 20; T35N-R2E which was near the large springs on this tote road.

How far north the tote wagons went along this road is not known, but Chas. Johnson, Worcester, told me that around 1900 he found a part of a broken wagon wheel along the road, near Worcester.

Isaac Stone had come from the state of Maine. He must have first followed the Wisconsin River as far north as Lac du Flambeau, where he married an Indian woman. The census of Marathon County, Town of Jenny, 1870, lists him as 47 years old, with a son, Alvin, 20 years old, another son, Langly, 15 years old, and a daughter, Nancy, 12 years old. No mention of his wife. We know she was living, so perhaps she is not listed, being an Indian. Sometimes Isaac is referred to as Major Stone, however there is no record of him having served in the armed forces. And referring to the census of 1870 we see his oldest son, Alvin, was 20 years old. So Isaac was in the Lac du Flambeau area before 1850 and only 27 years old.

Nevertheless, he did come to the Spirit area in 1860. Not only was he the first logger, but he also cleared land to raise hay and potatoes for his crew and oxen.

Because he had these clearings in the area might have been one reason for starting the German Settlement here.

Siegfried Meier, a soldier in the German Army and Sgt. in the Union Army, was a good soldier. He had a small farm on Wind Lake, Racine County, but no record of him being a real good farmer.

After the Civil War was over, he went to Texas to look over some homestead land, as the homestead act had taken effect Jan. 1, 1863. However, he was not satisfied with this land. Instead he went north to look over the homestead land that was available along the Spirit River. This land was inside the land grant given to Wis. Cen-

tral Railroad by the government, to build a railroad from Menasha to Ashland. He took his thirteen year old son, Karl Albert, and came to the Spirit River area, via the tote road from Wausau through Jenny, now Merrill, in the spring of 1873, the same year the Wis. Central Railroad was built as far north as Mackeys Spur south of Ogema. He must have found the Spirit River valley to his liking. (Spirit Lake and Spirit River had been named by the Indians before the white man came to the area. They used the Indian name for Great Spirit, but this was too hard for the white man to pronounce, so white men just said "Spirit". The Chippewas who chased out the Sioux in 1750 called it Minsi Sagaigon. Yes, the Indian had seen the Great Spirit on the lake in the morning fog.)

In order to make a railroad profitable the area would need people. So we have reason to believe that they offered some subsidy to anyone that would bring in settlers. And Siegfried must have, while working with the surveyors, picked out homestead land with running water, that would make good homesteads. For a few years we have no record of his activity here in this area, but by 1878 he had brought back from Germany the first group of homesteaders. He made two trips to Germany to bring these people.

These people immediately filed and settled on their homesteads on their arrival.

They came from the area of Frankford on the Oder, and port of embarkment was Kiel. These first immigrants came by sailboat; the trip was six weeks on the seas.

These people were cousins or second cousins of Siegfried Meier. They packed all their belongings in trunks and wooden boxes made especially for the trip. Besides clothing, they brought carpenter tools, stone hammers, etc. Some of these men were cabinet makers and stone masons. Not only did they bring tools, they also brought apple seeds, potato eyes, also herbs for healing, like black root and Katzchen Kase. Siegfried had told the settlers anything that grew in Germany would grow in Wisconsin.

The ocean voyage was long and everything changed when they stepped on American soil. It was hard to find anyone that could understand them. They were not allowed to roam free, but kept in a group. At Albany on the Hudson River they were put on a barge that had brought cattle east, and they started west through the Erie Canal, through the Great Lakes to Milwaukee. Here they met people from their homeland. From Milwaukee they headed north on box cars with plank seats running the length of the car.

But none of these hardships could dampen their spirits, they just kept looking ahead, Siegfried had said, they would each get a piece of land, bigger than a state in their fatherland. And above all they would be free to do just as they pleased with it. They could build their own homes, there would be streams with run-

ning water on their land, clean enough that you could drink right from the stream. They would be able to keep and sell anything they would raise on their land. They could build their own church. They could build a school and all their children could go to school. Now everyone could learn to read and write. Very little did they complain about the hard benches or the smell of the cattle cars, always looking forward to the wonderful promised land.

Although the railroad now ran through Ogema, the settlers came by way of Wausau, Jenny, and the tote road, because Siegfried was acquainted with this route.

As they walked up the tote road they sang and the wood-folks must have been surprised to hear these jolly German songs ring through the virgin timber. All the hardships of the trip were all forgotten. Now they were free. What a wonderful feeling - FREE - for the first time in their lives.

There were three families of Schmidts, two families of Zahn's and the families of Zahlke, Hadel, Kruger, Mantei, and Thom. Martwicks came by the way of Sweden, so arrived a year later. Also at that time Rohde, Werner and Glewwe came to join them.

It was late spring, so the first thing to do was plant the seeds and roots. They caught fish, a fish about a foot long; "it did have many bones", but it was indeed a "succor" and it was plentiful. Berries grew in the swamps. And they knew when fall came they could eat Kartoffel and Kraut. There were many birds almost as large as a chicken and Siegfried said when fall came, they could catch or shoot all they wanted. They also set snares for rabbits and deer. They had never had so much food before in their lives.

This was a wonderful feeling, to be free, to eat whatever food they could get. To some it was the first time they were able to eat as much as they wanted. And of course, they shared with each other, at this time there was no envy in anyone.

There was one thorn that left a sore spot however; it seems that Siegfried and his son, Karl Albert, had worked with the surveyors and knew where the corner posts of the homesteads were. Everyone was to get a stream of running water on their homestead, but for some reason Johaan Thom did not get the land he wanted. He was the only one that did not get running water on his homestead.

Every homesteader was entitled to 160 acres and most of them filed on 160 acres. However, when Rhode came, he wanted 40 acres. This he said was enough.

When the emigrants first came to the area, they built shelters or huts of bark they peeled from the large hemlock trees. They then started building log houses; this was an experience for them, because in Germany they used stone and brick, with mortar. When

they used wood they used it to frame the building. So their new log houses were crude. They could have hired the Swede emigrants because they were experts with the broadax and adz. This they learned in their native land. But they had no money to hire anyone. So they helped one another and before winter came everyone had a warm log house. They knew how to lay stone so some dug basements under their houses and laid up walls with loose rock. Also some dug wells and curbed them with loose rock. Some of those wells are still being used today, 1977. The stones were laid so well that they could never cave in. The roofs of their log houses were made by splitting hollow cedar the length of the rafter and laying them like a tile roof. The swamps were full of cedar and easy to find hollow trees. This type of roof was called a scoop roof, so their houses were called scoop shantys.

Winter came much to soon. The men went to work for the pine loggers, McCrossen, Stone and others. But the women had nothing to do except keep their shantys warm as they still didn't have cattle or sheep. This was perhaps the longest winter ever. When spring came the men worked at driving the logs down the river, all the way to the mills at Wausau. There they would be paid their wages for the winters work. Yes, they had a few beers and sang their happy German songs, but they were not lumber-jacks, so they did not spend much of their stake, but bought cattle and sheep to bring home. They went as far south as Stevens Point, they then led their animals home, some of them over 100 miles. And as they had to leave their animals eat on the way, this must have taken two weeks to make the trip.

This then was the beginning of the German Settlement.

About the same time a Pastor Ostergren was helping Swedish emigrants find homesteads around Ogema. Some of them came out as far as the German Settlement, along with some Germans. Among these were Marheines and Andreaes and other Germans that came to Ogema at this time were the Martens and Luedke's. So, of course, the German people of the German Settlement soon became acquainted with these people who spoke their language.

As I have already mentioned, Isaac Stone had three farms. One at Stone Lake named after Alvin Stone who lived there, another farm at the forks of Squaw Creek and the Spirit River now "Spirit Falls", where Jacque Gill lived. (St. Germain Boushard had a log house, just east of the Gill home which was built in 1860 and is still standing now, 1977.) Stone also had a farm on the north branch of the Spirit, on the now Price and Lincoln county line. The farm was known by three generations as Middlefarm.

About 1880 several Swedish families came to the area and settled just north of the German Settlement. These people came down the Wisconsin River from northern Michigan. Among these were Chas. Hilmar Olson, Albin Johnson, Amandus Johnson, A.P. Wolfstram, J. Swenson and Peter Johnson. These men came to log the white

pine. They were all experts with the broadaxe and adz. Their log houses were a masterpiece of workmanship.

Many of the men of the German Settlement worked for these loggers in the winters. Peter Johnson was to build the sawmill on the Spirit River. He called his milltown, Graywood. It had a post office by that name. A.P. Wolfstram built the Covenant Church at Middlefarm and preached the Gospel there for many years. John Swanson was a shoe maker. There was no town road between this settlement and the German Settlement until a man named Strucker bought land in the north side of Sec. 23, and a road was built for him. This road connected these two settlements. It also gave the people of the German Settlement a road to Tomahawk by way of Spirit Falls.

About the same time Siegfried was cruising homestead land, another group of men, Scandinavian people, came up the tote road as far as where Stone had a camp on the north branch of the Spirit. Here G. Nystrom, John Wick and others found their homestead Land. The first trip these men made up the tote road was in the hot summer. They just carried a small lunch, thinking they would get food at the lumber camps along the road, but this was summer and the camps were deserted. Surely they thought, there would be food at McCrossens headquarters camp. But this too was deserted. They didn't even find a porcupine that they might roast. So they were near starvation by the time they started back to Jenny. They were so tired that they decided to stay at McCrossen camp over night. In the morning someone looked in an old barrel in the cook shanty and to their surprise, they found some dried apples. This food was enough to give them strength enough to make the trip back to Jenny.

Prior to 1879, when Price County was formed, the German Settlement was in Lincoln County, Town of Jenny. So the men went to Jenny to vote. According to voting records they did not go to Ogema to vote and the first time I find their names on the poll list, is when they voted in a schoolhouse in the Town of Spirit, 1883.

Of course, the distance to Jenny, through the woods was not too much farther than the tote road to Ogema, as the first tote road into Ogema went by Adams Mill and around the swamps and lakes. Also around some of the steep hills.

Before the homesteaders came to the area, other men had come to log the white pine. They would just file an intention to homestead, this gave them the right to cut timber. So we find that in 1873-74 B.A. Plumer, Jim Becker, A. Betterson filed on land. Also Geo. Silverthorn and C.D. Gilmore filed on what later became August Jahn homestead in 1873. These men cut all the pine along the Rocky Creek and drove them down the river to Wausau. Only one of these men came to pick up the money for these logs. Later it was learned that one had murdered the other, to get all the money for these logs.

Later when Knox Bros. built a mill ten miles north of the Spirit River, many of the people of the German Settlement sleigh hauled their pine logs to this mill. Here they could get paid without going all the way to Wausau for their money. It wasn't until U.S. Leather Co. of Maryland built tanneries in the towns, that the settlers were able to get much money for their work. Now they could peel the bark of the hemlock trees and sell it for cash at any of the tanneries. At first they could not sell the hemlock logs, but at least they could sell the bark, as they had to cut down the trees any way to clear land. It wasn't until 1900 that they could sell the hemlock logs, and couldn't sell hardwood logs until the veneer mills started buying in 1910. Hemlock railroad ties were another means of income. Papermills started buying balsam and spruce pulpwood, but it wasn't until the thirties that the papermills started using hardwoods.

The first death recorded in the settlement was that of a little girl, "Metha L. 'Tochter' von, A. & J. Manthey." Born 1872, died 1881.

The first school house was built on the S.W. corner of Sec. 22. It was half way between the Schmidts to the west and Aug. Jahns to the east. It was a long walk for most of the children, as there were still no roads. It meant the children would always walk in groups. As Fred Schmidt was ten years old at the time the school was built, he said he only remembers going to school one day. He then went to work in the woods. In 1884 Bessie McDonald came to teach in this school in Sec. 22. She boarded with Mrs. Herman Jahn. Mrs. Jahn could not speak english nor could the eighteen children that attended the school. And Bessie McDonald could not speak German. Miss McDonald later became Mrs. C.D. Fenelon. The teachers of course, taught the English language first, before she could teach anything else. So when the older children registered, she said the German spelling of some of the names should be changed, so Zahn became Jahn, Mantei became Manthey and Rohde became Rhody. The school did not stand on this location long because the Danielson's, Magnuson's and Peterson's wanted a school. So they built a school house on the NW side of Siegfried Meier's land. The name of the school was changed to Liberty school when our country went to war with germany in 1917. When I started school in 1908 the teacher some days had as many as fifty pupils on rainy days when the older boys couldn't work outside. Boys up to 18 years old would come just for a day; some of them older than the teacher. They really didn't have their minds on "book learning."

The Scheller family came in 1885 and were the first German family to homestead in the area, that were of no relation of any of the former families. Their oldest son, Oswald, had a photograph gallery in Phillips for awhile. They were a thrifty, hard-working family. Mrs. Scheller, a small woman, perhaps 120 lbs. could do the work of a man. There are many stories of her stamina, such as walking into Ogema and bringing home 50 lbs. of supplies on her back in one day. Before they had a house or clearing on their homestead

they stayed in a log house, west of the Zahlke home and at noon she would carry lunch to the men. She would carry the food in one hand and a coffee pot full of coffee held out in front of her, the three miles along the road, in the other hand. At that time the only small pails were made of wood, so I suppose she could warm the coffee in a metal pot, over the fire. It didn't take long for this family to clear one of the largest and nicest farms in the settlement. Mr. Scheller was a very talented cabinet maker, a trade he had learned in Germany. This talent is still carried on to the fourth generation of this family. Their youngest son, Otto, was the first to own an automobile in the settlement, a 1914 Model T Ford.

About 1900 another thrifty German family, the Weiglets bought land from the W.C.R.R. Co. across the road, so they then had close neighbors. They also made a nice farm. These two families had the nicest apple orchards in Price Co.

The first German to homestead in Sec. 24 was F. Radlke. He didn't stay long, but sold his land to Gust Anderson. Mr. Anderson, a single man, built a dam on the Spirit River and put in a water wheel about 10 feet in diameter. With this he ran a small sawmill.

About 1900 the Rib Lake Lumber Co. built a railroad into the German Settlement and several logging camps sprang up.

The W.C.R.R. Co. offered to sell 80 acres for \$300.00. This brought in a group of Norwegian families from Valders, Wis. They came to make farms, although most of them had worked as shipbuilders at Manitowoc; all were carpenters. There were two families of Hougens, although they changed the spelling to Hogan. Also the Larsens, the Gustavasens, Nelsons and Andersons. They were of great help to the other Norwegian people, when the Norwegian Lutheran Church was built in the northern part of the town. In 1908 the Larsen's built a dance pavilion $\frac{1}{4}$ mile north of the school on the top of the German Hill. It was used for about 12 years.

Today however, 1977, there are no longer any descendants of these families living in this area, even though Knute Anderson married a German girl, Helen Manthey. They raised their family here, but in 1915 sold their farm to Emil Sommers.

With the Rib Lake Lumber Co. camps in the area, there were jobs for anyone that wanted to work for wages. It also meant that the farmers had a good market for anything they could raise. This was a great help to these settlers. Now they could buy horses, farm machinery, stoves, and sewing machines. But most of all they could build new houses and barns. They were in need of large barns as the cattle feed was 90% loose hay.

From 1905 on, there were many large barns built. Most of these barns were of timber frame. As most of the barns were 40 ft. wide, these timbers were hewed from a tree large enough to make a 8 x 8 -40 ft. long. I know of one timber hewed from a spruce tree; the timber is an 8 x 8 over 60 ft. long. A man by the name of

Reed had a saw and planing mill about 10 miles north of the settlement so many of the settlers hauled logs to his mill to be sawed and planned for lumber. The Reed family continued in the lumber business until 1973.

First the trees, mostly Rock Elm, were skidded out, then hewed to 8 x 8 timbers. Now the carpenters would drill and mortise these timbers, so that they made the frame for the building. When all the timbers were ready, the farmer would announce to all that he was going to have a raising bee. Everyone in the area would come to help raise the building. This meant that the women folk needed several days in advance to bake and cook for the bee. Not only did the neighbors come for this, but also any lumberjacks that happened to be near. The farmer would also set up a couple double-headers of beer. A raising bee was a day of fun and frolic. But, before night fell the frame of the building would be up. So then the carpenters could board up the frame and have it ready in another week for a shingling bee. This was another big day, with a lot of fun. These large roofs were shingled with cedar shingles in one day. I believe all the large buildings in the settlement were put up in this way.

Prior to 1900 the tote road to Merrill was still used by the settler, even though they now had roads to Ogema, Rib Lake and Tomahawk through Spirit Falls. By 1902 my father sold butter to the Standard Store in Tomahawk, making that trip about every two weeks.

About 1895, Herman Jahn, now a widower, went to Merrill and bought a team of horses from a dealer. He brought them home through the tote road. Well, one night the gate was left open and the horses were gone. He tracked them through the tote road all the way to Mosinee, back to their former home. The dealer had bought the team from a widow by the name of Schwartz. A year later, Herman Jahn and Mrs. Schwartz were married and Mrs. Schwartz and her two children came to live on the Jahn farm. Herman Jahn was a very progressive man besides making a nice farm. He had the first grain thrashing machine, driven with a steam powered tractor. It was a large cumbersome machine with drive wheels over six feet in diameter, 16 inches wide, with spade lugs. As a boy I helped haul water for this steam tractor. The grain separator was a Red River Special. Hand fed with a straw conveyor and the grain was measured with wooden half buschel tubs. Mr. Jahn also had a sawmill, a pure bred percheron stallion and a pure bred Gurnsey bull. After his oldest son Wm. died, two men from Coloma, Wis. bought the Wm. Jahn homestead and they also had a sawmill on the north side of the creek. Jahns mill was on the south side. Weifman and Wagner sawed lumber and shipped it out on the Rib Lake railroad that had a track running between the two mills.

After 1890, many people bought land or homesteaded. Some just cleared a small clearing and lived awhile. One of these was a man that worked with surveyors, a Tom Hoken that had a clearing on the river in Sec. 27. Two generations knew this place as Tom's clearing. A Mr. Rueman came to the settlement and married one of the Thom daughters and made a home on the S.E. corner of the Thom homestead. Later a Christensen family came from Minneapolis and bought railroad

land. Mr. Christensen had more book learning than most, so he served on the town board and school board. Another man to become well known in the German Settlement was Emil Walgreen, an all around handy man. He came as the engineer for Johnson's Mill.

The first group of German emigrants were all of one religious faith, so as soon as they could afford it they asked a German Lutheran, Pastor Doripat, to come down from Butternut to hold services in the school house. March 1901 they formed themselves into a congregation known as the German Lutheran Church, Town of Brannan. Trustees were Edward Martwick, Henry Rhode Sr., and Herman Jahn. Witnesses were Aug. Glewwe, Fred Werner and Jhaan Thom.

About the same time the Norwegian people of the northern part of the town were building the Our Saviors Lutheran Church and the Norwegian people from the German Settlement helped to support this church.

About 1892 Siegfried Meier sold the north half of his homestead to Christ Hentricks. Then about 1907, Hentricks son-in-law, Aug. Zielke took over the farm.

About 1910 Sophia Meyer, a spinster, bought several parcels of land in the settlement and with her brother, Geo., and his wife, built a large house N.W.S.E. Sec. 27. Mrs. Geo. Meyer was the first organist in the church. Geo. Meyer was not a farmer, but a salesman, sometimes called Lightening Rod George. He worked for the connector of the Merinette Railroad owned by Mr. Bradley, Tomahawk, that was built through Spirit Falls, with the Rib Lake Lumber Co. Railroad. His plan was to have the Soo Line extend the spur they had built from Chelsea to Rib Lake all the way through to Tomahawk. This never happened.

He also formed a sort of land company with many of the settlers joining in to encourage new settlers to the area. This group brought in Frankhauser, Hahn, J.J. Schmidt, Neigenfind, Kutsedorff, Magee, Kraft, Faggs, and others. However none of these people stayed very long.

In 1916 A.E. Meier built a blacksmith shop, N.W. corner of Sec. 23. People came from a ten mile radius to have their horses shod and wagon and buggy wheels rebuilt. He ran this shop for about 12 years.

About 1920 many more people migrated into the area; most of these people were good farmers. There were the Brietzkes, Semrows, Schiepps, Weilands, Hoffmanns, Morthensons, and Linds. Also Teschler, Siroin and others. I will not try to name all the people that have migrated in and out of the settlement from here on.

However, in the drought years of the thirties, people from the larger farming areas brought their cattle up north to the German Settlement, to pasture them on the leaves of the saplings and the wild grass along the streams. They also cut the wild meadow grass. This was not good hay, but it did keep cattle from starving.

As I have mentioned before, the first school house was in Sec. 22 and later moved to the Siegfried Meier land in Sec. 26. Soon an addition was built, because the enrollment at times reached 50 people. The first teachers I have any record of are the Clark sisters. One of them taught the German Settlement school and received \$15.00 per month. For this she also started the fire to warm the school and swept up at the close of the day. She boarded at the Albert Meier Sr. home but furnished most of her own food and paid Mrs. Meier \$2.00 per month for her room. The Meiers did furnish some potatoes and meat for her meals. In this record I will not name all the teachers. There wasn't much change in the school itself, except a well dug in 1910. After the war, in 1919, a new school was built which still stands today. Prior to 1938 any pupil that wished to attend high school needed to stay in the town that had the high school. But then in 1938, Rib Lake bought a school bus and came out as far as Sec. 29 and a feeder bus picked up the pupils in the settlement, meeting the Rib Lake bus. Soon a high school bus picked up pupils from the settlement and as the school district was consolidated with the Rib Lake district, the 7th and 8th grades also went to Rib Lake. The last eight grades in Liberty was 1953. In 1963 the school was closed and all pupils were transported into Rib Lake.

Since the days of the early 20th century, many more settlers have been drawn to the German Settlement, hoping to find here what they are looking for, replacing some of the old timers in the woods, telling the tales of their grandfathers or making some new ones of their own. The settlement doesn't have a McDonalds, but it has something much more valuable: a cast of characters from many corners of the world; Germans, Swedes, Finns and others who provide an ever changing history.

GERMAN SETTLEMENT circa 1890

