

Standard Form For Members of the Legislature

15
1856
1872
1872

Name of Representative Oliver Chase L. Senator _____

Represented Winneshiek, Howard, Mitchell, Worth and Winnebago Counties, Iowa

1. Birthday and place 1820 Denmark

2. Marriage (s) date place _____

3. Significant events for example:

A. Business _____

B. Civic responsibilities _____

C. Profession Pastor; farmer

4. Church membership Lutheran

5. Sessions served 6th General Assembly 1856

6. Public Offices

A. Local Justice of the Peace at St Ansgar, Iowa

B. State _____

C. National _____

7. Death 27 Feb 1892 Austin, Minnesota; buried

8. Children Martin; Charles; Edward

9. Names of parents _____

10. Education _____

11. Degrees _____

12. Other applicable information _____

- He came to America in 1843 with a party of Norwegian immigrants who joined the Norwegian settlement which had settled at Lake Muskego northwest of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- He had never been ordained, but needing a spiritual leader, he was ordained by a German Lutheran pastor of Milwaukee serving at Muskego until 1846.
- He was called to Rock Prairie settlement, Rock County, Wisconsin staying until 1853 when he moved with his family to St. Ansgar, Iowa.
- While at Rock Prairie he had to deal with immigration problems and settlement.
- He set out to find new places where Norwegians might find good farm land from the government, mostly in Minnesota.
- In May 1853 a party of 40 men and families set out for Mitchell County, Iowa. He founded the village of St. Ansgar, Iowa.
- He lived at St. Ansgar until 1872.
- In 1872 he visited friends in Virginia hoping to build a Scandinavian settlement there on cheap land in the "Northern Neck" region. The project was unsuccessful but stayed until 1878.
- In 1878 he was called to a congregation in Blooming Prairie, Minnesota.
- In 1885 he retired and moved to Austin, Minnesota.

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CLAUS L. CLAUSEN: PIONEER PASTOR AND
SETTLEMENT PROMOTER

ILLUSTRATIVE DOCUMENTS

Translated and edited by CARLTON C. QUALEY

INTRODUCTION

One of the most prominent and vigorous characters in early Norwegian-American history is the pioneer pastor and farmer, Claus L. Clausen. Of Danish birth, he came to the United States in 1843 at the age of twenty-three as a member, with his newly-acquired wife, of a party of Norwegian immigrants who joined the Norwegian settlement which had gathered about Lake Muskego, northwest of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Although Clausen had studied theology, he had never been ordained into the ministry. On petition of the settlers, who felt deeply the lack of a spiritual leader, Clausen was ordained by a German Lutheran pastor of Milwaukee and served the congregation at Muskego until 1846. In that year he accepted a call from Norwegian settlers in the so-called Rock Prairie settlement in Rock County, southern Wisconsin, and made Luther Valley the center for his activities amongst the widespread Norwegian settlements in southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. He remained at Rock Prairie until 1853, when he removed with his family to his new home west of the Mississippi River at St. Ansgar, Iowa.¹

Clausen was popular in the pioneer Norwegian settlements, and through his missionary activities and his writings he became widely known. He was one of the three founders

¹ Margreth Jorgensen, "Claus L. Clausen, Pioneer Pastor and Settlement Promoter, 1843-1868." This is a manuscript thesis submitted for the degree of master of arts at the University of Minnesota in June, 1930. A copy is in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran church in America and was one of the storm centers of early church controversy between factions in the Norwegian Lutheran church bodies both in this country and in Norway. In addition to his religious work, Clausen engaged in considerable journalistic activity. He was the first editor of the influential Norwegian-American newspaper, *Emigranten*, and was also associated for a time in the publication of a monthly Lutheran church paper, the *Luthersk Maanedstidende*. Ole Munch Raeder, a Norwegian traveler, visited Clausen in 1847 and in his account of the visit stated:

He is busy writing a book on America, which, to judge by the few portions of it which he read to me, will not merely discuss the merits of Wisconsin as an immigrant residence but will give a comprehensive survey of the history and the political institutions of the entire country. As he has spent several years in America, has been both pastor and farmer in several places, under conditions which made it imperative for him to familiarize himself with all that pertains to the lot of the immigrant and since he is as trustworthy as he is capable and enterprising, his book will undoubtedly be a great help to Scandinavian immigrants in the future.²

This book does not seem to have been published, however.

While pastor at Rock Prairie, and, previously, at Muskego, Clausen was brought into direct contact with the problems of immigration and of settlement. Hundreds of Norwegian immigrants came to the Wisconsin settlements annually and Clausen was forced to take measures to aid these people to earn temporary subsistence and to find land. The increasing number of immigrants coming and the gradual exhaustion of good government land in southern Wisconsin made the problem of the care of the new immigrants very serious. Clausen was deeply concerned over this state of affairs and set out in person to find new areas

²G. J. Malmin, ed., *America in the Forties; The Letters of Ole Munch Raeder*, 136 (Norwegian-American Historical Association, *Travel and Description Series*, vol. 3—Minneapolis, 1929).

where the Norwegians might obtain good farm land from the government. Naturally, his attention was attracted to the lands west of the Mississippi River, particularly to those in Minnesota. This new area had just become a territory, and steps were being taken to acquire the land from the Indians. Clausen therefore wrote to Governor Alexander Ramsey of Minnesota Territory in January, 1850, inquiring about opportunities offered in Minnesota Territory for immigrants. This letter is the first of the documents published herewith. Ramsey's reply is not preserved, but it must have been encouraging, for in the summer of the same year Clausen, with some companions, made a trip up the Mississippi to St. Paul and thence to St. Cloud. He returned to St. Anthony Falls and from that place traveled a distance of forty miles up the Minnesota River, turning off at a small river that he called the "Cannon Ball," which he followed to its mouth. He then returned to St. Anthony and explored the region east of Lake St. Croix. He finally found land which he considered satisfactory on the Rush River near the site of the later town of New Centerville, Wisconsin. From this point he returned to his home at Luther Valley.³ This trip was directly responsible for the Norwegian settlements in St. Croix and Pierce counties, Wisconsin, that were established shortly afterward. On his journey Clausen saw a great deal of land in Minnesota that, although still Indian country, was soon to be opened to settlement. The information made available by this trip must have proved invaluable to many a settler who planned to move across the Mississippi into the new territory.

On August 14, 1852, Clausen and two companions set out on a second journey into the region west of the Mississippi River. This time he himself was interested in finding a new home. This trip, and the country explored, are described in the second and third documents published herewith. The

³ Jorgensen, "Claus L. Clausen," 74.

first document is an article from *Emigranten* based on a letter which Clausen wrote to the editor, C. M. Riise, and the second is a letter from Clausen which the paper published. That Clausen was enthusiastic about the opportunities offered in this new area is obvious in his accounts, and that this enthusiasm was infectious is evidenced by the great stream of Norwegian immigrants who, in the years following, poured into the region he had described. In the article in *Emigranten* for April 29, 1853, Clausen stated that he expected to start with his family for Mitchell County, Iowa, within two or three weeks. In the interval between his return from Mitchell County in 1852 and his departure in 1853, his articles in *Emigranten* and his personal contacts brought news of the new region on the Cedar River to thousands of Norwegians both in this country and in Norway.

About the middle of May, 1853, Clausen and a party of some forty men with their families left Rock Prairie for the Cedar River country in northern Iowa.⁴ After experiencing considerable hardship en route, as they made the trip partly on foot and partly with wagons and oxen, the party finally reached the land selected in Mitchell County. Here Clausen founded the village of St. Ansgar, which became the nucleus of an extensive Norwegian settlement in Mitchell and adjoining counties. This colony became a point of dispersion for Norwegian settlements in northern Iowa and southern Minnesota during the fifties and for northwestern Minnesota and the Dakotas during the sixties and seventies. Undoubtedly the route urged upon prospective immigrants by Clausen was followed by hundreds of Norwegian pioneers, as well as by other travelers who came from Wisconsin and other eastern states in search of land. Clausen maintained his contacts with the Wisconsin settlements by correspond-

⁴H. R. Holand, *De Norske Settlementers Historie: En Oversigt over den Norske Indvandring til og Bebyggelse af Amerikas Nordvesten fra Amerikas Opdagelse til Indianerkrigen i Nordvesten*, 403 (Ephraim, Wisconsin, 1909).

ence and through the columns of *Emigranten*, and in 1854 he made a personal visit of a few weeks' duration in his old haunts.⁵ As a result of these contacts, and through his prestige amongst the Norwegians, he continued to be a strong factor in attracting settlers to the lands west of the Mississippi River in northern Iowa and southern Minnesota. His widespread missionary activities in this region made him as well acquainted and as widely loved as he had been in his earlier field of service in southern Wisconsin.

Clausen remained at St. Ansgar as pastor and farmer until 1872, and during that time he engaged in a great variety of activities. In addition to his work as pastor, missionary, teacher, farmer, and synodical leader, he also engaged in politics, acting as justice of the peace at St. Ansgar in 1856-57, and serving in the sixth general assembly of Iowa as representative from Mitchell County. In 1862 he accompanied the famous Fifteenth Wisconsin Regiment of Infantry as chaplain and served for six months, after which he was forced to leave the service because of ill health. In 1867 he visited Norway with Pastor H. A. Preus. On his return, he led a faction of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Synod which resigned from that body, and in 1870, he cooperated in forming the Conference for the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical church in America and became the first president of the new church body. In 1872, he visited friends in Virginia and became highly enthusiastic over possibilities for the founding of a large Scandinavian settlement there on cheap vacated lands in the "Northern Neck" region. He moved there in the fall of 1872 and proceeded to campaign for settlers. A few, chiefly Danes, came in 1873, but the project was unsuccessful. He remained there, however, until 1878, when he received a call from a congregation at Blooming Prairie, Minnesota, which he accepted.

⁵ *Emigranten* (Inmansville, Rock County, Wisconsin), August 18, 1854, August 24, 1855. A file of this paper is in the library of Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul.

In 1885, he retired and removed to Austin, Minnesota, where he lived until his death on February 27, 1892.⁶

CLAUSEN TO ALEXANDER RAMSEY, JANUARY 22, 1850

[Ramsey Papers, Minnesota Historical Society Mss. — A. L. S.]

LUTHER VALLEY, January 22d, 1850

TO HIS EXCELLENCY, ALEXANDER RAMSEY, GOVERNOR.

Sir! I feel assured in my mind that you will pardon the liberty I hereby use in addressing you, as a stranger to you, and asking for some information from you, when I tell you my motives and my situation. I am now, and has [*sic*] been for nearly seven years, a minister amongst the Norwegians in this State and the northern Illinois, and having in that time acquired some knowledge of the american language, institutions and other matters, my advice has often of late been asked by the large bodies of Emigrants from Scandinavia, especially from Norway, who annually comes into this country, as also from those in the old country who propose to emigrate, concerning matters here, of importance for them to know, and especially about where the best locations for settlements on public lands are to be had. A large number of Emigrants who came in last season, are now staying over the winter around here in the settlement, purposing to look out in the spring for public lands to settle upon, but as they are alike unacquainted with the country and the language here, it is to be feared that many of them may be misled to their serious disadvantage, if left entirely to themselves, or, which is often worse, to the guidance of interested speculators. They have appealed to me for advice and assistance, but the time is past, when I from my personal acquaintance with the government-lands—of which there are none here now in this section of country—could be able to advice them where to go. But Minnesota has often during the last year been noticed in the papers in such a way, as to make me beleive, that some parts of that country in the vicinity of Lake Pepin & st. Croix-River & lake, would be most preferable for my hardy and enterprising countrymen, both as to climate, soil, and the principal

⁶ Jorgensen, "Claus L. Clausen," ch. 8, 11, 12.

natural advantages. This Belief has been strengthened by conversation with persons who has [*sic*] been through that country, and give it a high character, but before advising my country-people to go there, I still wish to have more information about it myself, and from sources that I could rely on, and no better way to get information about that country has occurred to me, than by addressing Your Excellency, who both from your residence in that country, and from your official situation, that commands so numerous sources of information, probably is more able than any other person to give me the desired information. If you would therefore deign to give me a description of the country adjoining the lakes and River aforementioned: the climate, soil, timber, water, etc: or refer me to some sure and reliable source to get information about it, you would thereby greatly benefit & oblige myself and my country-people. Those Norwegians, in whose behalf I now principally write, are generally poor, but sober, hardy and industrious farmers and mechanics; but I have received letters from Norway & Denmark, informing me, that several men with considerable capital, wish to go over here, if I can lead them to places where they can invest their capital profitably, in improving water powers erecting mills and other machineries, and building towns, etc: and I should therefore be very much gratified, if Your Excellency would please to let me know how far those objects might be gained in your section of country, and perhaps point out to me the most favorable places. If Your Excellency's Answer is so, as to encourage an emigration up there, I am determined to go there myself, and will in all probability have a considerable norwegian settlement on the banks of one of the lakes or water courses next fall.—Hoping that Your Excellency will consider this letter favorably and favor me with an early answer, I will remain most respectfully, Your obedient servant

C. L. CLAUSEN

Please direct your letter to
Rev. C. L. Clausen
Inmansville Post-Office
Rock County, Wisconsin.



1860 United States Federal Census

Name: **Claus L Clausen**
 Age in 1860: 40
 Birth Year: abt 1820
 Birthplace: Denmark
 Home in 1860: St Ansgar, Mitchell, Iowa
 Gender: Male
 Post Office: St Ansgar
 Value of real estate:

Household Members:	Name	Age
	<u>Claus L Clausen</u>	40
	<u>Bergeta Clausen</u>	41
	<u>Martin Clausen</u>	15
	<u>Charles Clausen</u>	8
	<u>Edward Clausen</u>	6
	<u>Lewis Clausen</u>	4
	<u>Elizabeth Yorgoson</u>	15

Source Citation: Year: 1860; Census Place: St Ansgar, Mitchell, Iowa; Roll: M633_256; Page: 83; Image: 222.

Source Information:

Ancestry.com, 1860 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: The Generations Network, Inc., 2003. Original data: United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860*, Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1969; M633, 1,436 rolls.

Description:

This database is an index to individuals enumerated in the 1860 United States Federal Census, the Eighth Census of the United States. Census taker recorded many details including each person's name, age as of the census day, sex, color, birthplace, occupation of males over age fifteen, and more. Relationships were shown between members of a household. Additionally, the names of those listed on the population schedule are linked to actual images of the 1860 Federal Census. [Learn more...](#)

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