

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received JUN 9 1983  
date entered JUL 22 1983

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic The Norwegian Settlement of Bosque County TR

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Southwestern part of Bosque County; see continuation sheets for specific locations of individual properties N/A not for publication

city, town Clifton  vicinity of

state Texas code 048 county Bosque code 035

3. Classification

| Category                                     | Ownership                                   | Status  | Present Use   |
|--|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district            | <input type="checkbox"/> public             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> building(s)         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied        | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure           | <input type="checkbox"/> both               | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress             | <input type="checkbox"/> educational                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site                | <b>Public Acquisition</b>                   | <b>Accessible</b>                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object              | <u>N/A</u> in process                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted   | <input type="checkbox"/> government                   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> thematic | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial                   |
|  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> no                           | <input type="checkbox"/> military                     |
|  |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> museum                       |
|  |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> park                         |
|  |   |   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence |
|  |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> religious                    |
|  |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific                   |
|  |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation               |
|  |   |   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant     |

4. Owner of Property

name See continuation sheets for individual properties

street & number

city, town N/A vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bosque County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Meridian state Texas

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Texas Historic Sites Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1979, 1982  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Texas Historical Commission

city, town Austin state Texas

## 7. Description

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Condition</b>                              |  | <b>Check one</b>                              | <b>Check one</b>                                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair      | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed               |   | date 1893 (no. 29)                                |

### **Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The thematic nomination titled Norwegian Settlement of Bosque County contains 35 individual sites and one rural historic district of approximately 2,900 acres. All of these properties are situated in southwestern Bosque County, in an area of 150 square miles, bounded roughly by the towns of Clifton, Meridian, Cranfills Gap, and the site of Norway Mills. Including the structures within the Upper Settlement Rural Historic District, the nomination is composed of 46 farmsteads, two churches, and one mill, all of which were associated with the 19th-century Norwegian occupation of this part of the state. The log, stone, and frame structures which are represented exhibit clear Norwegian influence, or association, especially the early ones. The characteristically Scandinavian double house is identified and described.

### The Settlement Area

The area of Bosque County colonized by Norwegian immigrants in the 19th century is characterized by gently rolling hills and occasional limestone outcroppings. In the 1850s there were very few trees in this region, and the land was covered with grass which, it is claimed, came up to the waist of a man on horseback. Since that time the countryside has been cultivated with wheat, oats, corn, and cotton, and recently has been turned to pasture. More live oaks, cedars, and other scrub bushes now dot the hills and line some of the roads than at the time of settlement. Numerous small creeks and springs flow through the local valleys.

The present nomination represents an attempt to help conserve the character of this land and the built environment of the Norwegians who pioneered it. Also a part of the present nomination is the creation of a rural historic district around the old Upper Settlement Community which grew up at the foot of Rogstad Mountain, near the Bersvend and Kari Swenson Homestead. Although each of the contributing properties within this district has been deemed individually eligible for the National Register, the remarkably undisturbed character of this rural Scandinavian community warrants its recognition as a group.

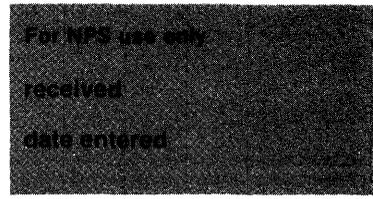
### The Architecture

The buildings can be divided into three major categories:

1. log structures, usually temporary quarters raised by Norwegian settlers upon their arrival;
2. stone houses, constructed between 1855 and c. 1885, and their associated outbuildings.
3. wood-frame houses, built from the late 1870s through 1910, and their associated outbuildings.

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The Log Structures

Traditionally the earliest Norwegian settlers in Bosque County are believed to have constructed small log houses, or stone-and-wood dugouts, in which to live while clearing farm land before erecting more permanent shelters. Of the earliest pioneers, for instance, the Dahl, Questad, Ringness, and Jenson families all are said to have occupied one- or two-room cabins upon first arriving in the county in the 1850s, while Ole and Ann Pierson are believed to have lived for a short time in a stone dugout. With the exception of a few stones and a shallow pit on the Pierson Place, none of these shelters has survived. Several later examples, however, have been identified. Although all appear to date to the 1870s, it is believed that they nonetheless provide a good idea of the form of the earlier pioneer structures.

The best preserved of the Norwegian log residences is the Erickson-Amundson cabin (no. 20), which was constructed in 1874 by Even and Petrine Erickson. It stands as the centerpiece of a pioneer complex that includes a log barn and corn crib, as well as several slightly later frame structures. The remains of other log houses have been found on the Adolf and Christine Godager Homesite (no. 19), and on the Peder and Trine Pederson (no. 44) and Amund and Carlin Ilseng (no. 47) farms. In addition, an 1873 log building has been incorporated into a later house on the J. H. Bekken homestead (no. 27), and another (unidentified) log house, which stands on Bee Creek about four miles southeast of the Erickson-Amundson cabin, has been covered with asbestos siding. Both the Erickson-Amundson and Godager cabins are nominated as individual sites, while the Pederson and Ilseng places are contributing members of the Upper Settlement Rural Historic District. The asbestos-sided cabin has not been included in this nomination, although restoration might make it eligible for future listing.

Of these identified log residences, the Erickson-Amundson and Godager cabins are single-pen structures with side gables and central doorways. Remnants of the front lean-to porch and the original cedar shakes are still visible at the Godager site. Especially significant in the latter structure are the log plates, which project out beneath the gable ends of the roof in a manner reminiscent of Norwegian building practices. The Pederson cabin, which was originally set on a high stone cellar, recalls the Norwegian Laftehus ("log house") tradition. The Laftehus was a traditional and common Norwegian structure, since abundant and straight logs were easily come by in that country. The few trees available to the settlers in Bosque County, in contrast to those of Norway, supplied scrawny and crooked timbers. As a consequence, the log buildings erected in this part of Texas were much cruder in appearance than the finely crafted Laftehus of Norway. Characteristically, these New World buildings were constructed with a variety of notching techniques and required heavy stone and mortar chinking to fill the irregular interstices between logs.

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According to tradition, the early log buildings are supposed to have been erected with the assistance of neighboring farmers, and this may help to explain the wide variation in the notching and chinking techniques seen in the surviving cabins that have so far been located. An interesting description of such a cabin raising appeared in the Waco Tribune-Herald on July 14, 1946. The informant for the newspaper seems to have been Charlie Knudson, the youngest son of Knud and Carmeal Knudson, whose farm is described therein. Charlie Knudson was born in 1867 or 1868, about the time that these events must have taken place. According to this account,

Salve and Knud settled on adjoining farms of 160 acres each, where they (sic) was sufficient land which would not have to be cleared of trees before the first crop could be planted. For a short time, until their log houses could be built, they camped under an oak tree in a little lean-to made of lumber which they had brought with them. . . As soon as they could the two pioneers set about building houses for themselves. They cut and trimmed the logs themselves in the plentiful timber in the hills and dragged them to the sites. Then the neighbors came from all around to raise the one-room houses. Two men sat on opposite sides of the walls and received the logs as they were handed up to them, notched them with axes and set them in place. The chinks between the logs were plugged with clay and rocks.

They had to be content with dirt floors at first until they could make the long trip to Waco by ox-wagon to get undressed lumber. They brought it home with them, trimmed it and grooved it and laid it across log joists.

For a number of years the Knudsons occupied their log cabins, adding to them from time to time. Knud's remaining five children were born there, and those alive today remember their first home well (Waco Herald-Tribune, July 14, 1946).

When the need arose these early log structures were typically expanded with stone additions. The Godager (no. 19), Ilseng (no. 47), and Erickson-Amundson (no. 20) cabins, for example, all have stone lean-tos attached at the rear. In contrast to this, the Pedersons erected a larger stone building (no. 44) about ten feet from their original cabin, although both structures continued to be used and were apparently connected by a common roof and porch. Although no other examples have been positively identified, it is reasonable to believe that this type of expansion was common. More prosperous settlers, such as the Knudsons, chose to build more substantial, stone houses.

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The Stone Houses

Although there was a minor tradition of masonry construction in their homeland, stone was not a material as familiar to the Norwegians as wood. Yet good timber was scarce in Bosque County, and an adaptation was soon made to the abundant local limestone, which was an excellent building material. As noted in the account of the Knudsons' early years in the settlement,

Stone houses weren't expensive. Everything needed was right at hand. They dug white rock out of the hills and hauled it home while it was fresh and soft and could be sawed. After the rock had been out in the air a while it became hard. The same limestone produced mortar they needed to hold the stones together. A hole dug into the hillside and lined with hard blue stone made a serviceable kiln. Chunks of limestone were placed on a grate in the kiln and wood burned under it. The resulting powder was mixed with sand and water for mortar and after the house was erected was used to plaster the inside walls (Waco Herald-Tribune, July 14, 1946).

Most of this work was presumably undertaken by the owners themselves, perhaps with the help of their friends and neighbors. Yet the high quality of the masonry work, as well as an underlying kinship among many of the structures, points to supervision by experienced stone masons. As noted in the statement of Significance, this conclusion is reinforced by the appearance of three masons of Norwegian birth in the 1860 U.S. Census for Bosque County. This discovery also means that a number of the early but undated stone buildings probably hark back to this early period. According to our review of the State Patent Records, the 1860 U.S. Census, and the 1860 Special Farm Schedule, these 17 Norwegian homesteads were established in Bosque County during the first ten years of settlement (1853-1863). The locations of 13 of these pioneer farms have been identified, and seven of this number have a substantial architectural feature apparently dating from this first period of activity. Six of these sites are nominated herein to the National Register, and are

the Carl and Sedsel Questad place (no. 1),  
the Ole and Ann Pierson farm (no. 2),  
the Eric and Martha Linberg farm (no. 3),

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the Jens and Kari Ringness farm (no. 4),  
the Bersvend and Kari Swenson farm (no. 42), and  
the J. Lasson and Oline Reiersen farm (no. 45).

In addition, it is possible that the Wilson homesite (no. 14) should also be assigned an early date.

Although the Civil War created a temporary disruption in immigration and building activities, both began to pick up by the later part of the 1860s. Unfortunately, the State Patent Records from c. 1865 to c. 1875 are incomplete for this area, and a precise pattern of settlement during this period is difficult to recreate. The Special Farm Schedule for 1870, however, lists 46 local entries with recognizable Norwegian surnames, and the locations of about half of these farms have been identified through historical research. Nineteen of these sites are included in this nomination. They include the seven sites mentioned above, plus

the Gunarus and Ingerborg Shefstad house (no. 7),  
the Ole and Antonette Olson (Olson-Nelson) farm (no. 8),  
the Gunsten and Lofise Grimland house (no. 9),  
the Keddel and Liv Grimland farm (no. 10),  
the Christen and Johanna Knudson farm (no. 11),  
the Joseph and Anna Olson farm (no. 12),  
the Olson-Hanson farm (no. 17),  
the Hans J. and Petra Hanson farm (no. 38),\*  
the John and Martina Arneson (Olson-Arneson) farm (no. 39),\*  
the Amund and Carlin Ilseng farm (no. 47),\* and  
the Salve and Carline Knudson farm (no. 48).\*

With the exception of the Ilseng house, all the above properties have buildings constructed of stone dating from c. 1868 to c. 1885. Despite the hiatus caused by the Civil War, little distinction in most cases can be made between later stone houses and the earlier ones of the original settlers. Several readily identifiable patterns continue throughout the entire period of stone building in the community. The most consistent of these are the ground plans of the houses, which are divisible into two different, yet interrelated, groups.

\*Included in the Upper Settlement Rural Historic District.

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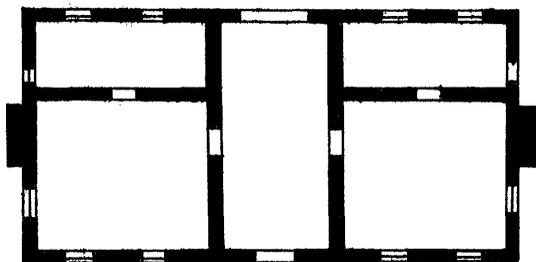
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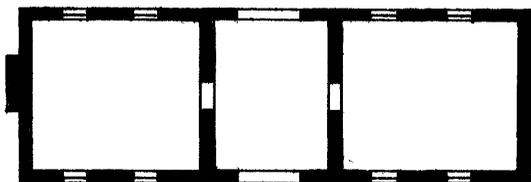
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The first group apparently derived from the Norwegian Dobbaithus (double house). The earliest of these is the Ringness house (no. 4), although the later Arneson (no. 39), Shefstad (no. 7), Olson-Nelson (no. 8), and Keddel Grimland (no. 10) houses are also double houses. They are characterized by a three-part, symmetrical plan most commonly with two large rooms set to each side of a broad, central entry-hall running from front to rear. Stairways were originally located in these halls, and led up to the attic or sleeping loft set under a low-pitched roof. Large hearths were disposed at both ends of the building to heat the two main, first-floor rooms. This sense of symmetry was carried over into the major elevations. The front facade, for instance, typically displayed a prominent, central, gabled porch flanked on each side by two windows. The end elevations, as on the Ringness house, were often composed of four windows regularly arranged about a centrally placed chimney piece.



Ringness house



K. Grimland house

Though only the Arneson house seems to retain its original (yet slightly modified) entry porch, historic photographs show that other houses once had similar porches. Another common alteration, in addition to the removal of porches, has been the addition of extra rooms onto the rear of the houses, thus modifying the original three-part configuration. Only the Ringness home originally consisted of more than three rooms. Although all the fine double houses are in reasonably stable condition, only one of them, the Arneson house, is now regularly occupied.

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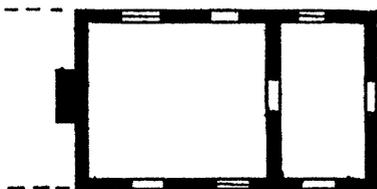
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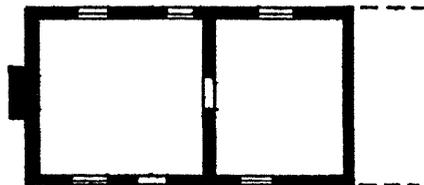
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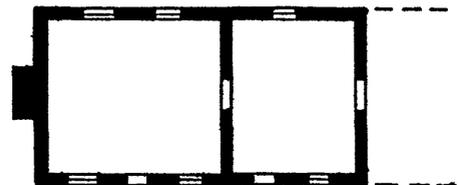
The second group of stone houses has an asymmetrical plan composed of a single large room similar in dimension and configuration to the main rooms of the symmetrical double houses, and a smaller second room opposite the end of the building with a single hearth. The chimney elevation of these houses is typically like that of the first group. Little consistency, however, is revealed in the other elevations. The gable end opposite the hearth, for instance, where an external stairway often offered access to the loft, is in some cases pierced by a single door and, in others, by windows. Likewise, the long elevations reveal an equally flexible approach, with windows and doors arrayed in a great variety of configurations. The Swenson (no. 42), Pierson (no. 2), Reiersen (no. 45), Christen Knudson (no. 11), Gunsten Grimland (no. 9), and the two Knudson (nos. 48 and 49) houses fall into this second grouping.



G. Grimland house



Pierson house



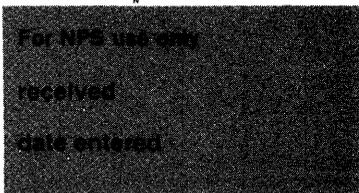
B. Swenson house

As with the first type of house, those of the second groups have likewise undergone modifications. Most commonly, a series of rooms was added onto one end of the original plan. The majority of these additions were made, however, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and are generally compatible with the original section, or are of historical interest in their own right, as in the case of the Bersvend Swenson House (no. 42). There are, however, half a dozen other Norwegian residences which defy such neat categorizing. For the most part these are smaller, single-room structures which are scattered geographically and chronologically throughout the settlement. Included among them are the Questad (no. 1), Finstad (no. 13), Alfei (no. 43), Pederson (no. 44), and Wilson (no. 14) houses. Still, many of these homes share certain characteristics which, when taken together, serve to distinguish them from the coeval stone houses erected by other ethnic groups in Texas, such as the Germans. The distinctive features include the low-pitched roofs and, on both ends of the house, the massive chimneys flanked by small and square attic windows. The most characteristic trait is the ubiquitous first-floor living room, measuring somewhere between 17 and 20 feet on a side, with a single hearth set at one end.

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In addition to the above structures, mention should also be made of the Reeder-Omenson house (no. 6). Although originally owned by an Anglo-American, Alvin Reeder, this house was constructed in 1870 by two Norwegians, Martin Shefstad and Charlie Olson. With its imposing, two-story porch and Greek Revival detailing, this structure is the only building in this nomination that relates closely to contemporary Anglo-American fashion in Texas. As mentioned in the Significance section, this house was closely related to Norway Mill (no. 5) and the small town that eventually grew up in that area.

Besides the individual characteristics associated with the design of the Norwegian stone houses, certain common auxiliary traits can be identified with the Norwegian-Texan farm complex of this period, viewed as a whole. High stone fences, for instance, were often erected to enclose pens and pastures. Excellent examples of these have survived on both the Questad place (no. 1) and the Hans Hanson farm site (no. 34). Many fine stone outbuildings are also associated with the houses, such as barns, detached kitchens, blacksmith shops and smoke houses. These are sometimes built into, or on, the slope of a hill in a typically Scandinavian fashion. Structures at the Questad place are superb examples, and others are found on the Ringness (no. 4), Linberg (no. 3), Swenson (no. 42), and Pierson (no. 2) farms. In particular, the blacksmith shop on the Ringness farm, with its gently sloping walls and elegant proportions, represents one of the finest pieces of masonry work in the entire community.

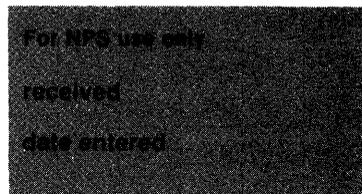
Finally, the overall tendency to site early homesteads on the slope of a valley wall, or on the top of a small hill, may also reflect the Nordic building heritage, which itself had evolved in the much more precipitous terrain of the Norwegian fiords. Siting, in fact, appears to have played a particularly significant role in the development of the settlement as a whole. Several of the first pioneers, such as Ole and Ellen Canuteson or Bersvend and Kari Swenson, chose extremely prominent locations for their homesteads. These farms, in turn, served as focal points for the development of small rural communities. This is still evident in the Upper Settlement Rural Historic District, which grew up, in part, around the Swenson Farm.

In this light, too, Our Savior's (no. 33) and St. Olaf's (no. 40) churches have been carefully placed to be visible from many points in the settlement. This placement produces a series of unforgettably picturesque vistas which continually unfold as one moves through the rolling hills of the Meridian Creek valley.

The second of these churches, St. Olaf's, appears to be the last major stone structure erected in the Norwegian settlement. It was begun in 1885, long after the main period of masonry building apparently had ended. Although the congregation of this church moved into Cranfills Gap in 1917, this edifice has been meticulously

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maintained and is still occasionally used for special services. Both inside and outside, it remains almost exactly as it appeared when it was dedicated in 1895. By that date, however, stone was rarely used as a building material in the community.

**The Wood-Frame Houses**

In a sense, the arrival of the railroad into Clifton in 1880 heralded a new era for architecture in the Norwegian settlement. With it came cheaper building materials, such as milled lumber and brick, materials that the Norwegians soon began to adapt to their own structures. The wooden houses may be divided into two groups according to their dates. The first group dates before the late 1880s, the second group between the late '80s and 1910.

Though some wood-frame construction possibly appeared in the community as early as 1872, as in the upper story of the Joseph and Anna Olson house (no. 12), the first major project in wood was Our Savior's Lutheran Church, which was begun in 1875. Cut wood, of course, had been employed earlier in the superstructures of even the first stone houses, but most of this appears to have been either hand-hewn or pit-sawn lumber. Because of its scarcity, it was used only sparingly.

The first residence to be constructed entirely of milled lumber was probably the James Jens Jenson house (no. 21) in the Bee Creek community. According to Jenson's grandson, who still owns it, this building was erected in 1876. Its two-story, board-and-batten construction is unique in the area for this period. It may derive from Norwegian building practices, where this so-called "carpenter paneling" was common in the 19th century. Only one other house in the entire settlement area seems to have employed this technique. This was the Lahlum house (no. 29), which was likely begun in the early 1880s. It was not until the later 1880s, however, that wood-frame construction became the typical mode of building in the Norwegian community, at which time it entirely eclipsed the use of stone.

The earliest of the later group of wood-frame houses dating from the late 1880s to 1910, is said to be the John and Mary Colwick house (no. 22) which was built by John Nordahl in 1889. It was quickly followed by half a dozen similar structures, many of which have also been attributed to the Norwegian carpenter Nordahl. All these houses were covered with horizontal siding, as opposed to board and batten. Typically, they are a story and a half to two stories in height, with high-pitched roofs and gables, and tall, narrow windows. This new verticality signaled a definite shift in fashion from the earlier, low-pitched roofs of houses like the Jens Ringness home (no. 4), and clearly reflects late Victorian proportions. So persuasive was this new

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style that when the Bersvend and Kari Swenson house (no. 42) was enlarged by their son B. B., around the turn of the century, the angle of the gables on the old stone part of the home was increased to conform to those of the new addition. Steeply pitched dormer gables were also constructed at this time.

In plan and form, most of these frame houses can be divided into roughly three types: asymmetrical, and early and late symmetrical. The first of the groups, exemplified by the Colwick house (no. 22), has houses of two long sections set perpendicular to one another in the form of a "T". The primary facade is the central leg of this T, and the main entryway gives access to a wide breezeway that opens through the house and divides the two blocks of rooms. Other structures belonging to this group include

the Tom and Martha Rogstad house (no. 23),  
the John Pederson house (no. 24),  
the Bernard Ellingson house (no. 28), and  
the Martin Larson house (no. 32).

The earliest of the houses with a symmetrical facade may be related to the symmetrical stone house. Like them, they are characterized by a central porch decorated with jigsaw ballusters, brackets, and polychrome shingles. To this genre of house belong

the Peder Dahl house (no. 25),  
the Tobias and Wilhelmine Schultz house (no. 26),  
the J. H. Bekken house (no. 27), and  
the Christen and Johanne Hansen house (no. 36).

Finally, the late symmetrical houses have two paired gables on their facades and a wider porch. Among this type should be included the recently demolished Syvent Reesing house, in addition to the Bersvend and Kari Swenson house (no. 42) and the second Brandhagen house (no. 30). The Bronstad house (no. 31), with its triple-gable facade, appears to be a hybrid of the last two types.

All of these houses were built between 1889 and 1910. Like the stone houses, they are often accompanied by outbuildings dating from the same period. Most characteristic of these are the barns, which are of board-and-batten construction and often display prominent arcades.

With the exception of the Hansen residence (no. 36), the wood-frame houses are generally in much better condition than the stone structures of the earlier period.

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Most, in fact, are presently occupied and well maintained. Other wood houses of these three groupings have also been identified in the community, but these have not fared as well. Because of incompatible additions, asbestos or aluminum siding, they are ineligible for the National Register. Some of them, however, can be added to this nomination at a later date if they undergo sympathetic restorations.

Survey Methods

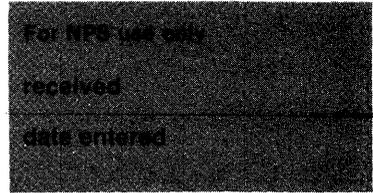
The properties included in the present thematic nomination were selected by means of a comprehensive historic-resource survey of the Norwegian settlement in Bosque County. The project identified over 110 properties, and was an interdisciplinary study including architectural and historical research as well as some basic historic archaeological work. The staff members of the National Register Department involved in this project were Daniel Hardy (historic architect), David Moore (historian), Kenneth Breisch (architectural historian) and Ulrich Kleinschmidt (archeologist). All information generated by this survey is on file in the National Register Department of the Texas Historical Commission, Austin.

The impetus for this project came from local residents who contacted the Texas Historical Commission, in 1978, about documenting 29 properties built by Norwegian immigrants west of Clifton between Meridian and Niels creeks, during the middle to late 19th century. During their initial visit to the area in March 1979, THC staff members Hardy and Moore observed several additional sites similar to those already identified by local residents as associated with Norwegian settlers. It became apparent that the first group of structures was only a small part of a more extensive rural community. The scope of the project, therefore, was expanded and the survey plans made much more comprehensive.

The majority of the sites eventually recorded were identified during the spring and summer of 1979. The district which was surveyed covered over 150 square miles, within an area bounded by Clifton, Meridian, Cranfills Gap, and the site of Norway Mills. All accessible roads within this area were traveled and every historic structure and site was noted. Territory immediately outside of this district also was examined, but no other significant Norwegian sites were found. Surveyors also examined two other Norwegian settlements in the state, those at Brownsboro and Four Mile Prairie, but no Norwegian sites were identified which were eligible for the National Register. During the fall of 1982, the entire area was re-examined to note any changes or alterations that may have taken place to the buildings since 1979. It was found that remarkably few modifications had occurred on those properties included within the nomination, so that all photos accurately portray the existing appearance of nominated properties.

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The Bosque County survey made use of U.S.G.S. maps, 1936 and 1970 Texas Highway Department maps, and recent aerial photographs. These tools helped to point-out potential sites and structures, which were then visited and evaluated. In addition, a General Land Office map of the county provided the name of the original patentees, and the date of their claim, for each parcel of land in and near the settlement. A study of the Norwegian surnames which appear on this map allowed us not only to relate many of the early sites with specific settlers, but to calculate the areal extent of the original settlement as well. Observation on early patterns of settlement were reinforced by detailed work with U.S. Census Records (1850-1900), the Special Farm Schedules for 1860 and 1870, county deed records (1854-c. 1875), county tax abstracts (1880-1896), cemetery records and two later county tax maps (c. 1920 and c. 1950).

These data were overlaid with other historical information, in particular that gleaned from the histories written by Oris Pierson and William C. Pool, and the centennial edition (1954) of The Clifton Record. Local, state, and national archives were examined for further information, and historical photographs and local historians such as Mrs. Rebecca Radde were consulted. Finally, written questionnaires were mailed to each property owner and the most important properties were documented with additional photographs, measured drawings, and by oral interviews with owners or previous occupants.

The final phase of the survey involved the review of all data and assessment of the potential of all the surveyed historic resources for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Criteria for this evaluation included the architectural character, quality, and integrity of a site, as well as its archeological potential (in some cases) and its association with significant historical events or persons.

Because of their age and their affiliation with the original settlers, stone and log structures were deemed the most significant of the resources, and most of them consequently have been included in the nomination. Those that were deleted, such as the house on the Hendrik and Christine Dahl farm, had been significantly altered in recent years. With sensitive restoration it may be possible to reconsider these properties for future listing.

Late 19th-century frame houses, which were mainly erected for second-generation Norwegians, constitute the other major group of resources in the nomination. Since these structures are more plentiful than the log and stone buildings, only those that remain virtually unaltered are included in the present listing. Finally, because of its unchanged state and high concentration of sites, the Norwegian settlement area in the Upper Meridian Creek valley was designated as the Upper Settlement Rural Historic District.

# 8. Significance

| Period  | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below    |  |   |  |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric          | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning     | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499            | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic     | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation                      | <input type="checkbox"/> law                    | <input type="checkbox"/> science                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599            | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> economics                         | <input type="checkbox"/> literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education                         | <input type="checkbox"/> military               | <input type="checkbox"/> social/                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering                       | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy             | <input type="checkbox"/> theater                         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-     | <input type="checkbox"/> communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> industry                          | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation                  |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> invention                         |   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) ethn |
|   |  |  |   | history - Norwegian settlers                             |

**Specific dates** see cont. sheets      **Builder/Architect** see continuation sheets

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The area of Bosque County originally settled by Norwegians is an outstanding and intact example of a rural ethnic community that grew up on the Texas frontier in the last half of the 19th century. Begun in 1853, it is the only substantial Norwegian settlement of this period in the entire southern half of the United States. Because of the self-contained and self-sufficient nature of its social and economic structure, this settlement remained somewhat isolated from the surrounding Anglo-American society for more than five decades. During this period much of the traditional Norwegian culture was maintained in language, religion, agriculture, and entertainment. In style, plan and siting, the log, stone, and frame houses built by these settlers show a strong relationship to traditional Norwegian building forms and practices. Though some of the earlier homes have been abandoned over the years, the entire area and its architecture have changed little since 1900. This nomination, which includes 35 individual sites and a large rural historic district of 14 contributing sites, documents the rare survival of an entire settlement community. Through careful conservation and study, it should be possible to learn much about early frontier life, the evolution of an ethnic, folk architecture, and the eventual assimilation of this northern European culture into American society.

Initial Immigration

Norwegian immigration to the United States first began in earnest when 53 emigrants from that country, led by Cleng Peerson, landed in New York City in 1825. Peerson, himself, had come to the United States in 1821 to investigate the potential of this new land for such a venture. After stopping briefly in Kendall County, New York, he and his small band eventually made their way further west. In 1834, they established themselves in LaSalle County, Illinois, where they founded the town of Norway. Following the establishment of this first permanent settlement, Peerson continued to encourage his countrymen to come to America, subsequently helping to found more than 30 additional Norwegian colonies in the United States before his death in 1865. It was during this period that the first large-scale influx of Norwegians into America began. The vast majority of these immigrants settled in the northern states of Minnesota, Illinois, and Wisconsin, although a few managed to find their way south into the newly created Republic of Texas.

The first permanent Norwegian settler in Texas appears to have been a physician by the name of Johan Nordboe, who was from Ringebu in Gudbrandsdal. Nordboe had arrived in New York in 1832, and four years later joined the Norwegian colony in LaSalle County, Illinois. In 1837 he moved again, to a new settlement in Shelby County, Missouri. By 1841, however, he was living on a large farm near Dallas, Texas, where he stayed until his death in 1855.

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Of more consequence for the future of Norwegian immigration to Texas, was the arrival in New Orleans in 1843 of Johan Reinart Reiersen. Like Peerson, Reiersen was a strong and articulate advocate of Norwegian emigration, and was sent by a group of perspective immigrants to America in search of land for future colonies. He thus spent the fall and winter of 1843 exploring the upper Midwest. The following year, however, at the urging of the Texas Consul in New Orleans, he traveled to the Republic of Texas, where he visited Nacodoches, San Augustine, and finally Austin. In this last city, according to Reiersen himself:

Congress had just assembled and I easily gained admittance to the president of the republic, General Houston, who was intensely interested in having immigrants choose Texas as their fatherland. He assured me that Congress would give a colony of Norwegians all the encouragement that could reasonably be expected (Johnson 1962: 252, 253).

Upon his return to Norway, Reiersen, who was also the editor of the newspaper Christianssandsposten, in 1844 published his observations in a small pamphlet entitled Veiviser for norske emigranter til de forender nordamerikanske stater og Texas (Guide for Norwegian Emigrants to the United States of America and Texas). In this he reported on the governments, agriculture, climate, and general structure of American society in Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, and the Republic of Texas. Although Reiersen in this booklet showed no special preference for Texas, his own interest in that republic was clearly revealed when, in 1845, he and his father Ole founded the town of Brownsboro in Henderson County.

The following year the Reiersens were joined by about 50 of their fellow countrymen, including Johan's brothers, Christian and George. In 1847 only a few more immigrants arrived. Among them, however, were Elise Tvede and Wilhelm Waerenskjold, who would marry in this new country the next year. Many of this first wave of pioneers, wrote Elise Waerenskjold, some 20 years later

. . . settled, contrary to Reiersen's advice in very unhealthy places. Thus eight families crowded into two small rooms which an American had built in the bottom lands, completely surrounded by grainfields. The American, who knew how unhealthy it was, wouldn't live there himself but was glad to rent his undesirable place to the Norwegians. Three families also built themselves a cabin in the bottom lands . . . . All went fairly well until the warm season arrived; then almost everyone became ill. With the

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exception of J. R. Reiersen's family, whose house lay on high and healthful ground. Consequently many were discontented, and some had died when the writer of these lines arrived in the settlement in October 1847 (Waerenskjold 1976: 83, 84).

The following year, perhaps in part because of this pestilence, Reiersen, Waerenskjold, and Elise Tvede moved further west, founding a second Norwegian colony at Four Mile Prairie, in Van Zandt and Kaufman counties. Here conditions proved somewhat more propitious for the new settlers, who were soon joined by several others from Brownsboro and, in 1850, by 14 additional families who arrived direct from Norway. By 1852, the total Norwegian population in the new state of Texas seems to have numbered just less than 150, and almost all lived either in Brownsboro or Four Mile Prairie.

Still, many of these new immigrants farmers appear to have been somewhat less than completely satisfied with their new situation. Johan Bronstad, for instance, noted in a letter to T. A. Gvestvang in Norway, dated July 21, 1852, that

. . . the soil here at Four Mile is poorer in quality than I believed land of this kind could be in America . . . . In addition, we have no other water than what we can find in stagnant pools in the brook, where even the pigs are wallowing and bathing. Furthermore, this water has to be carried a long distance, which, of course, is an unfortunate handicap in a country with such a hot climate (Unstad 1934: 48).

Because of these conditions, no doubt, a number of Norwegians from Four Mile Prairie began to look for a better area in which to live. In November 1851, Johan Reiersen Carl Questad, Johan Grimseth, Johan Bronstad, "and several younger folks" began exploring the land just west of Fort Worth. Here, along the West Fork of the Trinity River, in the northwest corner of Tarrant County, they discovered land fit for settling, and by the summer of 1852 plans were afoot to begin a third Norwegian colony in this part of the state. These plans, for some reason, never materialized. Instead, in late 1853 and in 1854, pioneer Norwegian families began to move from East Texas westward to an area about 40 miles beyond Waco, in newly established Bosque County.

The First Bosque County Settlement

By all accounts, the first Norwegian to settle in Bosque County was Ole Canuteson. Canuteson, along with other members of his family and Cleng Peerson, had come to Texas in 1850 from Peerson's settlement in LaSalle County, Illinois. They located first in

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Dallas County near Johan Nordboe's farm but, by 1852 or 1853, Canuteson had become restless and began to explore the frontier land along the Bosque River, west of Valley Mills. He was apparently drawn there by the promise of free and open land, with gently rolling hills, fertile grasslands, and numerous small, flowing creeks.

In the summer of 1853, under the terms of the recently renewed State Pre-emption Act, Canuteson claimed 320 acres in Bosque County, on the north side of Neils Creek, about eight miles from its mouth and 13 miles due south of Meridian. Here he was soon joined by his wife, Ellen, their children, and his parents, Canute and Betsy Canuteson.

This same year another small band of Norwegians set out from Four Mile Prairie with Ole Canuteson's friend, Cleng Peerson, in order to investigate other land in the vicinity of the Canuteson settlement. When they arrived at the edge of the hills overlooking the Bosque River Valley, wrote Axel Arneson, who had come to the settlement in 1873, these men sensed the land's potential:

There below them lay untouched by human hand the goodly land, fairer than they had dreamed . . . (and this) was only an introduction to a multiplicity of other valleys, one beyond the other, each separated by a range of hills--mountains they called them . . . . Here they found abundance of wood and water, and what good water means is beyond the understanding of those who have not experienced the trials of a hot climate with periodic droughts. Here, too, was good building stone and a "lay of the land" that makes for "hominess"; altogether, an ensemble that strongly reminded them of the home valleys from which they came.

After exploring many valleys they returned to their respective homes in East Texas to perfect arrangements for removal the following year . . . (Arneson 1941: 128).

Within two years these Norwegians had laid claim to about ten tracts of land in the county. Among the first pioneers were the families of Ole and Ann Pierson, Hendrik and Christine Dahl, Jens and Kari Ringness, Carl and Sedsel Questad, and Jens and Thonje Jenson. They were accompanied by Cleng Peerson, Ole Ween, Anders Bretta, Berger Rogstad, Ann Bronstad, and David Lund, among others.

The pattern of settlement established by these early pioneers set the pattern for the future Norwegian community in Bosque County, although in 1855, writes Oris Pierson, the settlers were still quite far apart:

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From Ole Canuteson to Berge Rogstad the distance was approximately fourteen miles, with H. Dahl and Jens Ringness living between the two. From O. Canuteson to Questad the distance was approximately seven miles and no family resided between them. From Ole Pierson to Rogstad the distance was only four miles, but the terrain is such that no vehicle could be drawn across the section at that time. However, these distances were soon to be shortened between families, for as new families arrived, they usually settled somewhere among those already there (Pierson 1979: 24).

The arrival of these new families at first proceeded slowly. Between 1855 and 1860, for instance, only a few more Norwegians seem to have attempted the arduous journey to Bosque County. Among them were the families of Bersvend and Kari Swenson, Ovee and Johanne Colwick, and Jo and Ann Wilson. They were joined shortly after 1860 by Ole and Antonette Olson, Canute Olson, and the nephew of Johan Reiersen, J. Lasson Reiersen. According to Oris Pierson, "There were one hundred and two Norwegians in Bosque County in 1860, thirteen of whom were born in Texas and eighty-one who were natives of Norway (Pierson 1979: 24)". Our own review of the 1860 U.S. Census, State Patent Records, and the 1860 Special Farm Schedule would seem to indicate that about 15 Norwegian homesteads were established in Bosque County between 1853 and 1860, and that five more pre-emption certificates were issued in 1863.

According to tradition, it was a common practice for the early settlers to erect small log shelters or dugouts in which to live during the first years after their arrival. As soon as they were able, however, they replaced these temporary shelters with more substantial houses of quarried limestone. The Hendrik Dahl and the Questad families, for instance, are both said to have lived in small log cabins until stone residences could be constructed. Likewise an account of the Ringness family asserts that Jens and Kari Ringness, along with three young children, occupied for five years ". . . a two-room log cabin that (Jens) built before he moved his family from Van Zandt County in 1854 (The Clifton Record, April 30, 1954)." The Jens and Thonje Jenson family apparently also occupied, and expanded, a log house over a period of quite a few years.

Although no log structures from the pre-Civil War settlement period have yet been identified, several later examples of log construction have been found in Bosque County. Through these it is possible to learn something of the early living conditions in the community. The best preserved is the Erickson-Amundson Cabin (no. 20), which was erected by Even and Petrine Erickson in 1874, and subsequently occupied by the Amundson family well into the 20th century. Of equal interest, despite the collapse of its

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roof, is the slightly larger Adolf and Christine Godager cabin (no. 19), which was constructed about the same time. In addition to these two structures, the remains of two other log houses can be seen in the Upper Settlement Rural Historic District on the Peder and Trine Pederson (no. 44) and the Amund and Carlin Ilseng (no. 47) farms. A fifth cabin can be found incorporated into the later J. H. Bekken house (no. 27).

As noted in the Description, all of these log structures are quite small and constructed rather crudely. Originally they apparently had dirt floors and open windows, making them even more uncomfortable. For these reasons, it is not surprising that they were quickly replaced by stone houses.

Though it cannot be positively confirmed, one of the earliest stone structures is traditionally said to stand on the Carl and Sedsel Questad place (no. 1) near Our Saviour's Lutheran Church (no. 33). According to one later account, for instance, Berger and Ann Rogstad are supposed to have "lived in a rock blacksmith shop on the Questad Place (The Clifton Record, April 30, 1954)" for a short time after their arrival in Bosque County in 1854. Lloyd Swenson, the present owner of the Questad farm, also believes that the blacksmith shop was the first stone structure erected by Questad. This, he says, was followed by the main house, which was begun between 1856 and 1858. The other stone buildings in this complex are, of course, very difficult to date, as is the case with most of the other stone structures in the settlement. Other houses which seem to date to the first decade of occupation, however, are the Pierson (no. 2), Swenson (no. 42), Linberg (no. 3), and Hendrik Dahl residences, all of which, with the exception of the Dahl house which was heavily altered in the 1950s, are included in this nomination.

Of particular importance among these early farms are the Questad and Ringness places. Not only is their architecture significant and intact, but their buildings were also religious and social centers. Among all of the Norwegian farmsteads in Bosque County, they exhibit the closest ties to traditional Scandinavian building practices.

The Ringness house (no. 4), for instance, appears to be closely related to the Norwegian Dobbelthus (double house). As Tom Carter has recently pointed out in his National Register Nomination for the Scandinavian pair houses of Utah, the pair house or double house was a common residence for upper-middle-class land owners by the mid-19th century in Scandinavia. It was thus natural that the imposing, symmetrical form of this style should be adopted by the new immigrant land owners in America, who suddenly found themselves with similar pretensions to a middle-class lifestyle.

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The Questad complex (no. 1), too, with its impressive array of stone fences and informally grouped stone buildings, exudes not only an impression of prosperity, but also the character of a Nordic mountain farmstead. The Questad place, in particular, served as a way-station for new immigrants. Carl Questad, himself, is said to have paid for the trans-Atlantic passage of several of these temporary boarders. These bondsmen, in turn, helped work the farm in order to repay him, and, according to tradition, it was they who erected much of the stone fencing that still encircles the main complex.

Other early structures also reflect an extremely high quality of craftsmanship in their masonry work. Outstanding among them are the Bersvend Swenson house (no. 42), the Ringness blacksmith shop, and the Linberg barn (no. 3). Given the good stone work, and the underlying kinship of forms and plans that was noted previously in the Description, it is not surprising that the 1860 U.S. Census records three "rock" masons of Norwegian origin living in Bosque County. These were John Johnson, Berger Rogstad (listed as Berry Rochester), and Eric (A. M.) Linberg. Carl Questad, too, in addition to being remembered locally as a skilled blacksmith and farmer, is often referred to as a rock mason.

According to Berger Rogstad's granddaughter, Johanna Rogstad, her grandfather had already begun to practice ". . . his trade as a 'Rock Mason,' a trade he learned in Norway," while living on the Questad farm in 1854. "He helped to build many of the old rock houses in the community," she said a century later, "some of them still standing--such as the rock building on the Questad place and an old rock building in Meridian (both unidentified)." "Shortly (after 1855) Grandpa purchased some land on the mountain, now known as the 'Rogstad Mountain,' where he built a nice little rock home for his family (The Clifton Record, April 30, 1954)." This building, unfortunately, has since burned.

Less is known of the activities of John Johnson, Eric Linberg or Carl Questad, although a number of buildings from the 1850s have survived on the Questad place. In addition, a barn and the remnants of a house from the early 1860s can still be seen on the old Linberg farm (no. 3). The quality of all of these structures bears testimony to the ability of the masons. The fine craftsmanship exhibited by all of the stone buildings in the settlement, in fact, speaks plainly of the skill of every one of the early stone masons. All seem to celebrate the stolid character of the Norwegian farmer in this forbidding land. As noted in the Description, these buildings would serve as prototypes for other stone houses in the community for at least the next 20 years.

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In addition to erecting stone buildings, the Norwegian settlement in the 1850s began to establish itself in other ways. The first schoolhouse, for instance, was built about 1857. According to Alvin Bronstad, this was known as the Peck School and was located ". . . on the north bank of Gary Creek some six hundred yards north-east of the Sokker top (sugar loaf) mountain (Bronstad 1933: 19). Its foundation was apparently still visible as late as 1931. It was, wrote Bronstad,

. . . a typical pioneer school house of post oak and cedar logs chinked with rocks and clay. It was about twelve by sixteen feet in size, or, as one of the pioneers put it, 'it was as large as the logs were long.' It faced south at which end was a door. On the east side there was an opening with shutter and no glass. A fireplace was built on the north end. The floor was of clay . . . (Bronstad 1933: 20).

During this same period, the old Canuteson homestead on the top of Norman Hill was establishing itself as an early center of other activities. In 1859, for instance, it became the first official post office for the community. Ole Canuteson was made postmaster and held this position until he moved to Waco about ten years later. Though the Canuteson house and post office have been destroyed, we have fortunately discovered an historic photograph of this very important structure. The site of the Canuteson house is well known in the community, but does not appear to have archaeological potential, because of removal of home and related features in recent years.

Understandably, the years of war between 1860 and 1865 inhibited further expansion or development of this new Norwegian community. Many of the men were drafted into Confederate service, several died, and the Union blockade of the Gulf Coast temporarily hindered further immigration from Norway.

Development and Growth of the Community

Within a few years of the end of the Civil War, the Norwegian community in Bosque County again began to receive new people and to expand. With this growth came renewed building activity and economic development. This second wave of immigration was spurred by the reopening of the Gulf ports, as well as by a series of severe epidemics in the East Texas settlements. In the fall and winter of 1867, for instance, 12 people among the 33 Norwegian families living at Four Mile Prairie in East Texas died in just such an epidemic. The following year, 12 of the remaining families fled to Bosque County in an effort to escape the pestilences.

This shift of population determined the future of the earlier Norwegian settlements in the state, for by late 1869, according to Elise Waerenskjold there were only 17

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Norwegian families left at Four Mile Prairie and the original settlement at Brownsboro had dwindled to 16. The Bosque County settlement, in contrast, had grown to about 60 households by that date. According to the 1870 Census, it now consisted of approximately 350 people living on 46 farms (see Special Farm Schedule, Bosque County, 1870). From this point on, the settlement in Bosque County became the focus of Norwegian immigration in the state, while the other two communities continued to stagnate.

Typical among the experiences of the second wave of settlers were those of the Salve and Knud Knudson families. Salve, the patriarch of the group, had first arrived in the United States with his sons, Knud and Oscar, and his daughter Signe, in 1846. Having originally settled at Brownsboro, the family moved in 1858 to Four Mile Prairie. Signe and her husband, Terry Nystal, settled in Bosque County in 1867, and were joined by her father and her brother, Knud, the following year. According to an account which can probably be attributed to Knud's youngest son, Charlie, who was born in 1867 or 1868,

Fear of the Indians had been the reason why the Knudsons and other families hadn't come from their former homes in east Texas to Bosque County a year earlier. They had been ready to move when word had come that Ole Nystal, a son of Salve's daughter who had made the move earlier, had been captured by Comanches. He was taken to Kansas and remained a prisoner for three months, finally being sold for government ransom and returned home. But fear of the dread cholera which struck once more in east Texas was more powerful than of redskins--they at least had a chance against the Indians--so they made the move in 1868.

Salve and Knud settled on adjoining farms of 160 acres each, where they (sic) was sufficient land which would not have to be cleared of trees before the first crop could be planted. For a short time, until . . . log houses could be built, they camped under an oak tree in a little lean-to made of lumber which they had brought with them (Waco Tribune-Herald, July 29, 1946).

These log houses soon were replaced by the two stone houses (nos. 48 and 49), which still stand within the confines of the Upper Settlement Rural Historic District. These, as noted in the Description, were probably constructed in the 1870s, but were still very similar in plan to the Swenson (no. 42) and Pierson (no. 2) stone houses, which had been erected more than a decade earlier. This practice of adopting the plans of earlier houses, was one that would be followed in other stone residences built by this second wave of settlers, so that structures of both the symmetrical and asymmetrical

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type can be found in this later period. Once the stone homes had been erected, life nevertheless continued much as it had before. For instance, the Knudsons continued to use an open fireplace for cooking and heating for many years, and much of their furniture was made by hand. For food they relied heavily on wheat and cattle, but also grew

. . . irish potatoes and sweet potatoes and they had an orchard of wild plum trees. Wild berries they could find in the hills. For meat, wild turkey, deer and fish were plentiful. Wild honey and cane syrup served as sweetening when there was no sugar. The syrup was cooked in a little clump of live oak trees near the house, 40 gallons annually for themselves and some for their neighbors.

The Knudsons, like other settlers, at first cultivated only land which was already cleared and planted crops they could eat. Cotton didn't become a staple crop until later, when they were in position to plant it and when gins came into the community. When they were ready to spread out and cultivate more land, some of it had to be cleared. The trees were cut down and hauled away and the stumps were pulled out by ox team . . . . Wheat and corn were the first crops planted. The plows were made of wood, wheels and all, except for the iron plow share, and were drawn by oxen . . . (Waco Tribune-Herald, July 28, 1946).

After threshing, the grain was taken to Waco for milling until mills came to nearby Clifton. This trip usually took about five days, and the Norwegians traveled in groups for protection. Here part of the wheat would be traded for flour and the rest sold. According to the Knudson account,

The mill in Waco bought only wheat, but some of the merchants and buyers would come and sample and purchase cotton. Also, cotton and wool which had been fashioned at home into white, black and grey cloth could be exchanged in Waco yard for yard for calico. From Waco they took home a supply of cloth and groceries . . . (Waco Tribune-Herald, July 28, 1946).

By the early 1870s, the largely unpopulated district that had existed between the Rogstad and Ole Canuteson homesteads had begun to fill in with new Norwegian farms. As Oris Pierson has noted,

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These late arrivlas settled among those Norwegians already in the community, and along the northwestern fringe of what may be called the colony. The locations made by those who arrived during 1868, 1869 and 1870 established the lines of the settlement fairly well, and only one or two areas were added later. We may say that the settling of W. T. Tergerson in the Mustang Community in 1873 more or less fixed the boundaries of what people have chosen to call the Norwegian settlement in Bosque County. The period that followed, from 1870 to 1946, is one of transition, expansion, development, and growth-- growth spiritually, economically, and socially--and finally one of absorption (Pierson 1979: 27).

For the first three decades of this period, at least, the settlement continued to grow, and this growth was actively encouraged by people in the community. For example, Hendrik Dahl, one of the original pioneers, returned to Norway in 1872 to visit his mother, but also to lead a new group of Norwegian immigrants back to Texas. According to one of these immigrants, Axel Arneson,

Hendrik Dahl was a fine type of man, very capable, not given much to talk, conservative in all his statements; but coming from Texas, a remote land about which were told such fantastic tales, the whole countryside in Norway was aroused with curiosity. What was repeated from one to the other heightened the fancy.

A land of continual sunshine, free from ice or snow or biting cold, where horse and cow unhoused grazed out the winter long, where wool grew on bushes, where pork and grapes alike ran wild. A mental picture took on the colors of oriental imagination. Many rallied around Hendrik Dahl to join him on his return to Texas. A very considerable company was made up, the writer's parents among them. Mother was a relative of the Dahls; she already had a brother over here, and so it came about that we too joined the expedition (Arneson 1941: 130).

It was a difficult journey and several of these voyagers died from its hardships, including Dahl himself. Still, many more survived and, with others like themselves, arrived in Bosque County to swell the ranks of the settlement. By 1890 there were over 1300 Norwegians living in this area.

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During this same period (1870-1890) the state issued pre-emption certificates for land in Bosque County to over 80 individuals with Norwegian surnames, although this number dropped to fewer than 30 during the next 20 years. According to Bosque County tax records, many more Norwegians purchased land from families of the original Anglo-American patent holders, so that by 1900 approximately 100 square miles of the county, in an area surrounded by Cranfills Gap, Norway Mills, Clifton, and the Even Erickson farm (no. 20) on Bee Creek, were almost entirely owned by Norwegians. As this community grew, it began to evolve distinctive signs of permanent settlement. According to Alvin Bronstad,

The flour mill at Norway Mill was built in about 1870 by Mr. A. Y. Reeder, Mr. O. Canuteson and Mr. Andrew Canuteson. Helping in the construction were Charlie Olson and Martin Shefstad . . . . The mill was operated under a three-way partnership plan--O. Canuteson, Andrew Canuteson, and A. Y. Reeder. This same company operated their gin and blacksmith shop by the same steam power that operated the mill (The Royal Visit, October 1982).

The Reeder-Omenson house (no. 6) was constructed about this same time by Charlie Olson and Martin Shefstad for Alvin Reeder. Though Reeder was not of Norwegian descent, Norway Mill (no. 5) was one of the first operations of this sort to serve the Norwegian farmers, and in the 1870s and 1880s a small community of about a dozen Norwegian and Anglo-American families settled around the mill and the Reeder house. Though nothing of this survives but the mill and the Reeder house, this community once included a school, general store, drug store, and several blacksmith shops. In 1878, this town of Norway Mills was platted, and a year later the post office was transferred from Ole Canuteson's farm at Norman Hill to this new community.

Eighteen seventy-nine witnessed the creation of another post office at Cranfills Gap, at the extreme western edge of the Norwegian settlement. This post office served the Upper Settlement District and the Mustang Community, while a third was established mid-way between Cranfills Gap and Norway Mills at Norse, in 1880, to serve the core of the Norwegian area of the county.

As at Norway Mills, small communities soon sprang up at both Cranfills Gap and Norse. Cranfills Gap, however, is the only one of these early towns which still survives. Norway Mills, in contrast, flourished for only about twenty years, from around 1870 to 1890, and Norse somewhat longer, from about 1870 until 1930. In 1890, the post office at Norway Mills was closed and moved to Norse. This post office, in turn, was shut down in 1931, when it was consolidated with the post office at Clifton.

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Of these three small towns, only that of Norse was founded by Norwegians and maintained a fundamentally Norwegian population throughout its history. All of its postmasters, for instance, possessed Norwegian surnames. As early as about 1869, wrote Alvin Bronstad, it had become the site of a new stone schoolhouse, which had been constructed by the Norwegians to replace the old Peck School. In 1880, as noted above, the town received a post office, and soon possessed a general store and blacksmith shop. These were joined in the 20th century by the Norse Telephone Company exchange, which was located in a wood-frame house that also served as the residence of its operator until it closed in the 1950s. Even at its height, however, Norse was never very large. According to Alvin Linberg, whose father was postmaster and ran the general store in the 1890s, it never seems to have consisted of more than these few buildings. Although no substantial, unaltered historical remnants of this town have survived, there is a historic photograph of the old Norse Post Office as it appeared about this time.

The fact that the Norwegians in Bosque County developed no substantial urban centers is not surprising, given the traditional rural orientation of these people. In Norway itself small farms long had been organized into rural communities, and it was these, and not the towns, that served as centers for immediate social, economic, and religious activities. The immigrant farmers who came to Texas in the 19th century apparently brought this tradition with them, and structured their new settlements along similar lines, dividing them into a series of small and loosely-knit rural communities.

The sites of these vanished communities are marked by a concentration of farmsteads and, occasionally, by surviving schoolhouses which were often their focal point. In Bosque County, farming centers of this type included the Norman Hill, Bee Creek, Turkey Creek, Neils Creek, Boggy, Upper Meridian, Mustang, and Harmony communities. As the names indicate, they were typically organized according to geographic considerations, most commonly in valleys and along small creeks. The best preserved of these centers is the Upper Meridian Community, or Upper Settlement. It is gathered around the Bersvend Swenson homestead, and forms the heart of the Rural Historic District in this nomination.

Conspicuously absent from these communities are the large social halls which so often dominate contemporary German and eastern European settlements in Texas. In the Norwegian settlement it was the individual farms that served this function. Thus dances and other social events were held at different houses, and were often rotated around the community from one house to another. Some farms, of course, played a more important role in this process than others, so that places like the Dahl farm, wrote Axel Arneson, stood out

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. . . in the memory of old folks as the highest expression of cordial hospitality; it was the gathering point of friends and kindred for miles and miles around. On 'Meeting Sundays' it was the accepted gathering place, and everybody was welcome. They came on horseback and by wagonloads. Under the magnificent live oaks over acres of extent were tied up the horses and oxen of the guests. Sometimes it was almost like a public gathering, yet there was always room for everybody . . . . The whole household joined in unaffected hospitality, and the Dahl gatherings imparted good cheer and a festive mood that tided over isolation and monotony . . . . What the Dahl farm was to the lower settlement, so was the Rogstad farm, only to a lesser degree, to the upper settlement (Arneson 1941: 132).

Of course the church, too, played an active role in the organization of the whole community. Most important in this respect is Our Savior's Luthern Church (no. 33). This was built under the supervision of Gunarus Shefstad on ten acres of land donated for the purpose by Carl Questad in 1870. Although the exterior of this building, which was originally of wood, has undergone extensive change, the interior remains much as it appeared when it was dedicated in April, 1885. The cemetery next door serves as the final resting place for many of the original Norwegian pioneers, including Cleng Peerson, and the church itself still plays an important role in the life of the community.

In December 1885, the same year in which this first church was dedicated, the congregation resolved to build a second edifice further to the west, in order to accommodate the farmers of the Upper Settlement. The following year, Andreas Mikkelson was awarded a contract to design and build this second church, which was named St. Olaf's (no. 40). In 1917 the St. Olaf congregation moved to a new structure in Cranfills Gap, but the "Old Rock Church" has continued to be carefully maintained, and stands today as a focal point of the Upper Settlement Rural Historic District. Though originally of different building material, the churches of St. Olaf's and Our Savior's share a similar plan and form, with a central bell tower and steeple, and a single wide nave with a small organ loft at the back. They are both remarkably similar to the Norway Lutheran Church, constructed in 1875 in Norway, Illinois. That settlement, it might be recalled, was founded by Cleng Peerson in 1834, 20 years before he himself was to migrate to Bosque County.

Transition and Absorption

In 1880 the railroad arrived in Clifton, which was located to the west of the Norwegian settlement, and brought new strength to this small community. As a result, by 1890 Clifton had replaced Norway Mills as the distribution and embarcation point

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for contact with Waco and the outside world. Within another decade or two it would also eclipse Norse and even Cranfills Gap as the major trading center for the Norwegian farmers. During this same period it began to draw increasingly larger numbers of Norwegians into its city limits. In 1896 the Lutheran College of Clifton was founded on its outskirts. By 1906, the town's Norwegian population was large enough that it was able to establish and build its own church. This increase in contact between the Norwegians and the outer world helped to bring about their eventual assimilation into Anglo-American society.

The arrival of the railroad also made available, for the first time, new and cheaper building materials such as milled lumber and bricks, which inevitably changed the course of local Norwegian architecture. The result was a wholesale shift from the stone buildings of the earlier era to larger, wood-frame houses. Although the first wooden house, that of James Jens Jenson (no. 21), predates the arrival of the railroad by about four years, the real heyday of wood-frame construction did not begin until the late 1880s, at which time wood almost entirely eclipsed masonry construction.

As noted in the Description, however, even these wood-frame houses, with their high-pitched eaves and polychrome decorative porches, are a unique style for Texas. It is said that many of them, such as the Colwick House (no. 22), were designed and built by the Norwegian-trained builder, John Nordahl, and that it was he who brought this style with him from his native land. In any case, and perhaps not entirely coincidentally, the closest relative of these houses may be the ubiquitous, wood-frame farm houses of the upper Midwest, an area that was itself heavily populated by Scandinavians in the 19th century.

The introduction of the telephone and eventually of the automobile after the turn of the century further increased contact with other areas. According to our interviews, most of the children in the community appear to have been bilingual as early as 1900, speaking Norwegian and English in their homes and English at school. Within another decade the Norwegian language was definitely on the wane. Interestingly, the architecture of this period seems to reflect a parallel assimilation of Anglo-American cultural ideals. In Clifton, for instance, it has not been possible to identify a specifically Norwegian building style and, in the settlement area itself, bungalows and other contemporary American fashions began to appear after World War I. In 1926, in fact, when the congregation of Our Savior's Lutheran Church erected a new parsonage, it was constructed in the Bungalow style. Significantly, perhaps, this was only one year after the final entry in the Norwegian language appears in the parish minutes.

Though a strong sense of community has been maintained throughout the years, the shift from Norwegian to a mixed Norwegian-American culture appears to have been

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accomplished by the 1920s. Only recently, as has happened elsewhere across the country, has a later generation begun to show renewed interest in its past cultural heritage. This interest was spurred by a visit to Bosque County of King Olav V of Norway, in 1982.

Nevertheless, many of the original Norwegian structures in the settlement have been abandoned for decades, and very few of them have been restored or otherwise modified. Most of the properties included in this nomination, too, are still owned by descendents of the 19th century settlers, who are enthusiastic about their past history. Thus the archeological potential of the region is considerable, and the opportunity exists for a careful coordination of historical studies with the planning and execution of any future restoration work in the community.

Documentation of the Sites

The properties included in this nomination are situated in the southwestern portion of Bosque County. Their location, as stated in the following inventory, is described as their distance and direction from the intersection of State Highway 22 and FM 219 in Clifton. The majority of sites are situated near unnamed and unpaved county roads, but those properties located near a farm-to-market (FM) road are appropriately indicated. The survey on which each property is located is also provided for clarification purposes. Each site is referred to in the nomination by its historic name, with the exception of the Brogdon farm (no. 15), which is only known by the name of its current owner. For those properties that were working farms at one time, the names of the husband and wife (if known) have been used. When applicable, other families who either were associated with the house for many years or who built large additions onto the original structure are included in the name, as in the case of the Hoff-Ulland farm (no. 18).

Unless noted otherwise, all of the nominated properties are noteworthy because of their architectural significance and their association with the Norwegian settlers. The Christen and Johanne Knudson farm (no. 11), the Ole and Ann Pierson farm (no. 2), and Our Savior's Lutheran Church (no. 33) have been altered, but are nominated for the reasons listed in their statements of significance. A site plan is provided for each nominated property. These maps, which vary in scale from 1":20' to 1":100', delineate the exact area to be nominated and take the place of a verbal boundary description. (This procedure was approved by Linda McClellan of the National Park Service by telephone, February 23, 1983.) Most of the boundaries follow physical features such as fence lines, creekbeds, or roadways, but in cases where no such features exist, the boundary is determined with respect to the structure which is being nominated.

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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property see continuation sheets for individual properties

Quadrangle name Sugarloaf Mountain, Clifton, Cranfills Gap, German Valley, Hurst Springs Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

See continuation sheets for specific UTM references

|   |                      |                      |                      |   |                      |                      |                      |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| A | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | B | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
|   | Zone                 | Easting              | Northing             |   | Zone                 | Easting              | Northing             |
| C | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | D | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| E | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | F | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| G | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | H | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheets for individual properties

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| state | N/A | code | county | code |
|-------|-----|------|--------|------|
| state |     | code | county | code |

## 11. Form Prepared By

|                 |   |           |                |
|-----------------|---|-----------|----------------|
| name/title      | Kenneth A. Breisch/Architectural Historian<br>David Moore/Historian |           |                |
| organization    | Texas Historical Commission   | date      | March 29, 1983 |
| street & number | P.O. Box 12276  | telephone | (512) 475-3094 |
| city or town    | Austin  | state     | Texas 78711    |

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

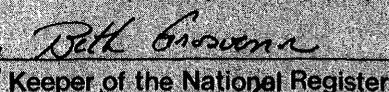


title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 12 May 1983

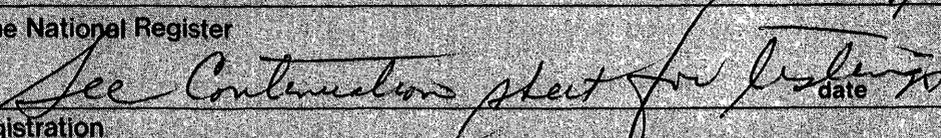
For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

  
Keeper of the National Register

date 7/20/83

Attest:  
Chief of Registration

  
date

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Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Norwegian Settlement of Bosque County Thematic Resources  
State Texas

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

- |   |                                     |        |                              |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------|------------------------------|
| 1. Bekken, J. H., House                       | Entered in the<br>National Register | Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 2. Brandhagen Houses                          | Entered in the<br>National Register | Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 3. Brogdon Farm                               | Entered in the<br>National Register | Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 4. Bronstad House                             | Entered in the<br>National Register | Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 5. Colwick, John and Mary, Farm               | Substantive Review                  | Keeper | <u>Reth Groovers</u> 7/22/83 |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 6. Dahl, Peder, Farm                          | Entered in the<br>National Register | Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 7. Ellingson Farm                             | Entered in the<br>National Register | Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 8. Erickson, Even and Petrine,<br>Farm        | Entered in the<br>National Register | Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 9. Finstad, Ole and Elizabeth,<br>Homesite    | Entered in the<br>National Register | Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 10. Godager, Adolf and<br>Christine, Homesite | Entered in the<br>National Register | Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |

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State Texas

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

- |  |                                  |            |                              |
|--|----------------------------------|------------|------------------------------|
| 11. Grimland, Gunsten and Lofise, House  | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
|  |                                  | Attest     | _____                        |
| 12. Grimland, Keddel and Liv, Farm       | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
|  |                                  | Attest     | _____                        |
| 13. Hanson, Hans, Farm                   | Substantive Review               | Keeper     | <u>Robert</u>                |
|  |                                  | Attest     | _____                        |
| 14. Hoff-Ulland Farm                     | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
|  |                                  | Attest     | _____                        |
| 15. Holen Farm                           | Substantive Review               | Keeper     | <u>Robert</u>                |
|  |                                  | Attest     | _____                        |
| 16. Jenson, James Jens and Martha, House | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
|  |                                  | Attest     | _____                        |
| 17. Knudson, Christen and Johanne, Farm  | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
|  |                                  | Attest     | _____                        |
| 18. Lahlum, A. H., House                 | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
|  |                                  | Attest     | _____                        |
| 19. Larson, Martin, House                | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
|  |                                  | Attest     | _____                        |
| 20. Linberg, Eric and Martha, Farm       | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
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|---|-------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| 21. Norway Mill                         | Entered in the<br>National Register | for Keeper           | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
| 22. Olson-Hanson Farm                   | Entered in the<br>National Register | for Attest<br>Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
| 23. Olson, Joseph and Anna, Farm        | Entered in the<br>National Register | for Attest<br>Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
| 24. Olson-Nelson Farm                   | Entered in the<br>National Register | for Attest<br>Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
| 25. Our Savior's Lutheran Church        | Substantive Review                  | for Keeper           | <u>Robert</u>                |
| 26. Pederson, John, Farm                | Entered in the<br>National Register | for Attest<br>Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
| 27. Pierson, Ole and Ann, Farm          | Entered in the<br>National Register | for Attest<br>Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
| 28. Questad, Carl and Sedsel,<br>Farm   | Entered in the<br>National Register | for Attest<br>Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
| 29. Reeder-Omenson Farm                 | Entered in the<br>National Register | for Attest<br>Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |
| 30. Reiersen, Hans and Berthe,<br>House | Entered in the<br>National Register | for Attest<br>Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Delores Byers</u> |

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State Texas

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|---|-------------------------------------|--------|------------------------------|
| 31. Ringness, Jens and Kari,<br>Farm            | Entered in the<br>National Register | Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Alvina Byers</u>  |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 32. Rogstad, Tom and Martha,<br>Farm            | Entered in the<br>National Register | Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Alvina Byers</u>  |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 33. Schultz, Tobias and<br>Wilhelmine, Farm     | Entered in the<br>National Register | Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Alvina Byers</u>  |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 34. Shefstad, Gunarus and<br>Ingerborg, House   | Entered in the<br>National Register | Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Alvina Byers</u>  |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 35. Upper Settlement Rural<br>Historic District | Substantive Review                  | Keeper | <u>Bob Grosvenor 7/22/83</u> |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 36. Wilson Homesite                             | Entered in the<br>National Register | Keeper | 7/22/83 <u>Alvina Byers</u>  |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 37.   |                                     | Keeper | _____                        |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 38.   |                                     | Keeper | _____                        |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 39.   |                                     | Keeper | _____                        |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |
| 40.   |                                     | Keeper | _____                        |
|   |                                     | Attest | _____                        |