

## Johan Nordboe

### The first chapter of Norwegian immigration (1821-1840) its causes and results (1895)

George Johnson came from Kendall to LaSalle county, Illinois, in 1835, where he died from cholera in the same week as Gudmund Haugaas, in July, 1849, leaving four children. He was married to a daughter of Jahan Nordboe.

According to the best information I have been able to obtain, Johan Nordboe came to Kendall, N. Y., in 1832. He was from the eastern part of Norway, and took his name from Nordboe in Kingebo in Gudbrandsdal. His wife was from CEsterdalen. Nordboe spent three years in Kendall, but did not seem to get on well with his countrymen there, who were all from the western part of Norway, and the Stavangerings, including Kleng Peerson, did not seem willing to give the man from Gudbrandsdal a fair chance. To Ole Canuteson, now of Waco, Texas, he made the statement that he could not get in Kendall the nice farm that he wanted, and that Kleng Peerson insisted on his taking an inferior one, which he did not accept. Johan Nordboe and Kleng Peerson were not therefore the best of friends for a time, but in their later years they seem to have become nearly, if not entirely, reconciled and their relations in Texas were friendly. In Norway Johan Nordboe had been an itinerant physician and he also practiced the healing art after he came to this country. I learn of his vaccinating children both in Kendall and in the Fox River settlement. Mrs. Norboe was a midwife.

In 1836 he moved to Illinois, but did not seem to like it there any better than in Kendall, and so we find him removing first to Missouri in 1837 (Shelby county), and then to Texas in 1838. So far as I have been able to learn he was the first Norwegian who ever went to Texas. He had no desire to found a Norwegian settlement.

On the contrary, his aim seemed to be to get away from his countrymen. He settled in Dallas county, Texas, where for himself and family he got a bonus of 1,920 acres of land. He was living in Dallas county when the Reiersons and Wserenskjolds came to Texas in 1845. In the early fifties he visited the Waerenskjolds at Four Mile Prairie. In a letter to me the late Mrs. Elise Wserenskjold describes him as a student of history and science. She says he was skillful in drawing and had talents for sculpture. When she saw him, he was a small, feeble man about eighty years old. Although he did not like to live in a Norwegian settlement, he felt a deep interest in his countrymen, and when he learned that the Reiersons and Waerenskjolds were living at Four Mile Prairie, old and feeble as he was, he could not help making them a visit. He was unable to ride horseback, and his sons who did not share their father's desire to meet countrymen, being unwilling to take him with team and wagon, the old man trudged on foot the long way from Dallas to Four Mile Prairie and arrived there a little before Christmas, 1851. He spent the Yule holidays there, and after Christmas Kleng Peerson came to accompany him to his home. This proves that he and Kleng had become good friends again. Nordboe was not entirely pleased with this part of the program, as it was difficult for the man from Gudbrandsdal to keep pace with the old Stavangering. Mrs. Wserenskjold adds to this incident that Johan Nordboe seemed to her a "very kind man." When Nordboe came to Texas in 1838, he had three sons, and he left a married daughter in the Fox River settlement, the wife of the sloopster, George Johnson. From Dallas county he afterwards moved to Tarrant county, where he died some time in the sixties, but I have no dates. His widow and sons went to California, but I have not been able to trace them and find out their address. The two oldest sons, Peter and John, were married to American women.

Through P. C. Nelson, now of Lamed, Kansas, I learned that John Nordboe vaccinated some of the children of Cornelius Nelson Hersdal in Kendall, and the rest of them in the Fox River settlement, and thus I was able to get at the years of his coming to America, of his coming to Illinois and of his departure for Texas.

At this point, I am in the dark in regard to the chronology, but either in 1848 or 1849, he must have made his first visit to Texas. He went down there evidently at the suggestion of John Nordboe, who had then lived several years five miles south of Dallas. Kleng visited John Nordboe, made some explorations in various parts of Texas, having been as far west as within a few miles of the present Fort Worth, and returned to La Salle county, Illinois, in 1850, full of the Texas fever. The rest of his life is easily told in O. Canuteson's letter to me, dated December 16, 1894: "In 1850, my father, with his family, came to my uncle, Halvor Knudsen, in Illinois. My mother had died from cholera between Chicago and Ottawa. In Ottawa, we found Kleng Peerson, just back from Texas, and on his advice, and on his promise to be our guide, we concluded to go to Texas. He stayed with us the three years we lived in Dallas county, and when we moved to Bosque county in 1854, he came with us, not as the leader then, but as a follower, being too old to undertake leadership any more. The last years of his life he had his home with O. Colwick (Kjolvig),

but would of course, go around among his neighbors, where he was always welcome and felt at home.\* He died December 16, 1865.

One of his neighbors and I were with him the last hours of his life. I closed his eyes in the long sleep of death. He was buried in the Lutheran cemetery opposite the Norwegian church near Norse P. O. in Bosque county, and the Norwegians in Texas afterwards put a small stone monument on his grave with the following inscription written both in Norwegian and in English:

Kleng Peerson,

The first Norwegian immigrant to America.

Came to America in 1821.

Born in Norway, Europe, May 17, 1782,

Died in Texas, December 16, 1865.

Grateful countrymen in Texas erected this monument to his memory.

One of the old settlers on Koshkonong in the southeast part of Christiana was Lars Johanneson Holo, who emigrated from Ringsaker? in Norway, in 1839. He was an intimate friend of Johan Nordboe, who emigrated from Ringebo in Gudbrandsdalen in 1832. Johan Nordboe wrote letters from America to Lars Holo, and this induced him to emigrate in company with a glass-blower by name Lauman, from Faaberg. This Lauman afterwards died in the Sugar Creek settlement, near Keokuk, Iowa.

In the year 1840, Gudinund Haugaas and Johan Nordboe, and possibly Engebret Larson Narvig, were the only Norwegians who had practiced the art of medicine in America. In Dallas county, Texas, where Johan Nordboe located in 1838 with the avowed purpose of getting as far away from his country men as possible. He left a married daughter in the Fox River settlement, and upon her death Ole Canuteson took her children to their grandfather in Dallas county.

When Canuteson and his party came to Texas in the fall of 1850, they stopped a while at Nordboe s. He lived on a high prairie, five miles south of Dallas. He had then lived there twelve years, and his houses already looked old. Nordboe came to Texas at a time when the state gave one section of land to each married man and half a section to each one of his children. As has been heretofore shown, JoTian Nordboe had availed himself of this liberality on the part of Texas. He got 640 acres for himself, and 320 for each one of his three sons, who came with him, and also 320 acres for the married daughter who still lived in Illinois. In 1850, this daughter in Illinois had died, and John, one of the sons of Johan Nordboe, came to Illinois to fetch the children. John and these children then joined Kleng Peerson and the Canutesons, and they all went together to Texas, where Nordboe s grandchildren received the inheritance of their deceased mother.

The Canutesons bought land five miles south from Johan Nordboe, that is to say, ten miles south of Dallas. There they lived three years and then moved to Bosque county. He is a very intelligent and well read man, and he has been of very great help to me in supplying me with information concerning Kleng Peerson and Johan Nordboe, both of whom he knew very intimately, and he has given me many valuable facts regarding the early settlements in Texas.

The Norwegian settlement in Bosque count now contains about 2,000 people. They have a Norwegian Lutheran church, and a Norwegian Lutheran minister resides among them. John, one of Johan Nordboe s sons, had also returned from Texas to bring to their grandparents three children left by a daughter of Johan Nordboe. The mother had died in the Fox River settlement or in Lee county near Leland. The result was that Kleng Peerson, Ole Canuteson and his young wife and his father, and John Nordboe and his sister s children, formed a party and set out for Texas.

They went by canal-boat from Ottawa to LaSalle, thence by steamer to St. Louis, thence by another steamer to New Orleans, and then by still another steamer to Shreveport. In New Orleans they were joined by two other Norwegians from Thronhjem. They got a wagon to haul the children and the baggage to a little town called Greenwood, sixteen miles on the way to Dallas. There they rented a house, and in it they left Mrs. Canuteson and The Nordboe children, and the rest of the party footed it to Dallas. Ole Canuteson, John Nordboe and the two men

from Thronhjelm took the shortest route, while Kleng Peerson and Ole Canuteson's father took a longer route as they desired to visit the Norwegian settlements in east Texas. Ole Canuteson and his comrades camped out at night, though it was the month of December, and after eight days travel they reached Johan Nordboe's home, having gone a distance of 200 miles. Kleng Peerson had instructed them not to locate in the Norwegian settlements east of Trinity river under any circumstances, and they obeyed him. Then John Nordboe hitched a yoke of large oxen to a light wagon and went after Ole.

The first Norwegian to settle in Texas was Johan Nordboe.

#### History of the Norwegian people in America (1922)

Johan Nordboe came from Ringebu in Gudbrandsdal in eastern Norway and is one of the first to come from some other region of Norway than Stavanger. He settled in Kendall in 1832; in LaSalle Co, 111., in 1836; in Shelby Co., Mo., in 1837; and in Dallas, Tex., in 1838, where he lived on a farm of 1920 acres and practised medicine. He was the first Norwegian to settle in Texas.

Johan Nordboe came to Dallas, Tex., in 1838. He was the first Norwegian from Gudbrandsdalen, the first Norwegian in Texas and one of the first Norwegian doctors in America. Nordboe did not found a settlement in Texas.