

## Ole Canuteson

Ole Canuteson came with his father, Knud Knudson , to the Fox River settlement in 1850 .

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

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.

In 1842, Kleng made a third visit to Norway, for what purpose I do not know. Mr. O. Canuteson, one of the early Norwegian settlers in Texas, and now a prosperous business man in Waco, Texas, writes me under date of December 16, 1894, as follows: "I am sure he (Kleng) made three trips to Norway. He came to my father s house (near Kobbervig, north of Stavanger). He brought letters from America to my father and others. I remember seeing him and I particularly remember a peculiarly made cloak that he wore. He had an atlas of the world, and showed us the maps,"., and he took occasion to express himself as opposed to the power the churches were exercising over the people.

What started him was that he found pictures of churches printed on the maps indicating that the countries were Christian. I remember he had it in for the Catholics. My father and I transported him a short distance in a boat, to a man that had a son in America."; This was probably in the autumn of 1842, for in May, 1843, we find him a passenger on board the bark "Juno" which sailed from Bergen for New York, with 80 passengers.

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.

Mr. O. Canuteson contributed \$15 to this monument, and superintended the matter of collecting funds and having it made. So far as I know, it is the only monument put up in honor of a Norwegian, in America, by public subscription.

On this point I am able to quote my friend, O.Canuteson, who lived in the same house with him for many years in Texas, who was with him in his dying hours, and who closed his eyes in death. He says: "I was intimately acquainted with Kleng Peerson from 1850 until his death in 1865. He was the most pronounced free-thinker I have ever known. I remember his having an old Danish free-thinking book translated from the German. He believed little or nothing of the Bible, especially of the supernatural part thereof. Whether he at anytime had belonged to the Quakers, I can not say positively, but time and again I heard him talk about them as models in religious and temporal matters, and I heard him talk about getting assistance, aid and comfort from Elias Tastad of Stavanger, Norway, he being their leader in that city."

In Dallas county, Texas, where Johan Nordboe located in 1838 with the avowed purpose of getting as far away from his countrymen 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.

Mrs. Wserenskjold was an eminent personality. No other Norwegian in Texas was better known than she. She took the deepest interest in all things both in Europe and in America. In her last letter to me, she discussed the death of Svend Foyen, which occurred recently in Norway. She was busy writing the history of the Norwegian settlements in Texas, but a few days before she died, she wrote to her good friend, Mr. O. Canuteson, of Waco, Texas, and complained that she was sick and said she did not think she would be able to complete her history. It is to be hoped that some intelligent person will secure her manuscript, and make the necessary additions for publication. Although I never had the good fortune of meeting Mrs. Wssrenskjold, my correspondence with her caused me to esteem most highly, this gifted, scholarly, kind, brave and noble woman.

Ole Canuteson.

In 1850, Ole Canuteson and his father Knud Knudson, came to his uncle, Halvor Knudson, in the Fox River settlement. His mother died from cholera on the way from Chicago to Ottawa. In the Fox Eiver settlement, they found Kleng Peerson, just back from a trip to Texas, and on his advice and promise to accompany them, they

concluded to go to Texas. They went to Dallas county and remained there three years, near where Johan Nordboe was then living. No Norwegian settlement was founded there. In 1853, they went to Bosque county, and Kleng Peerson went with them not as a leader this time, but as a follower, as he was now too old to lead in settlement enterprises.

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 timewhen 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, Johan 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 1350, 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.

The third Norwegian settlement in Texas was in Bosque county. It was founded by Ole Canuteson in the fall of 1853, and it soon became the largest in the state. The post office was Norman Hill, and Ole Canuteson was the postmaster from its beginning until he moved to Waco. The confederate government kept him in office during the war, and when the rebellion had ended the postoffice department at Washington did not disturb him. He spent three years in Dallas county, fifteen years in Bosque county, and since 1868 he has resided at Waco, where he owns the Riverside foundry and machine shop. 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. As the founder of the largest and most prosperous Norwegian settlement in Texas, Ole Canuteson deserves more than a passing notice. I am not able to do justice to his interesting and important career in this meager sketch of the Norwegians in Texas, but I am happy to be able to give a few additional facts in regard to him. Ole Canuteson was born September 4, 1832, on the island of Karmo (Karmt), an island which abounds in monuments of antiquity, on the farm Nordstokke, near Kobbervig, in the parish of the famous Augsvaalsnaes in Stavanger Amt. One of his uncles, Halvor Knudson, emigrated to America so early that he settled in the Fox Kiver settlement about the same time as Gjert Gregoriuson Hovland, and became his neighbor. A younger uncle, Jens, emigrated somewhat later in company with a fiddler, Sjur Dale, who afterwards became a Mormon. When Kleng Peerson visited Norway in 1842, he brought with him many letters from America to Ole Canuteson s father and to others. In 1850 his parents resolved to go to America, and he took passage in the Kohler brig, commanded by Capt. Westergaard. In this same ship came Eev. A. C. Preus with his wife, whose maiden name was Engel Bruun. Captain Westergaard also had his wife with him on board. The second mate was a son of the Kev. Kauring, of Tarvestad. Six weeks after leaving Stavanger they landed in New York. On the propeller, between Buffalo and Chicago, cholera attacked the passengers, and a Norwegian woman died and was buried on an island in the straits of Mackinac. As has been seen in earlier pages of this volume, cholera had raged fearfully both in the Fox Kiver settlement and in Muskego in the summer of 1849, and in 1850 the epidemic returned claiming many victims. Many of those who landed in Milwaukee were sick, and a number of them died after reaching their respective settlements in Wisconsin. Cholera committed great depredations on Koshkonong in 1850, and claimed my father and brother as its victims. When the rest of the immigrants landed in Chicago all were apparently well, but on board the canal-boat which carried them to Ottawa, the dreadful disease made its appearance, and among those who died was Ole Canuteson s mother. When the people in the Fox River settlement heard of the cholera they were panic-stricken and did not dare to receive the new-comers. Finally the Canutesons received shelter in a school-house, and fortunately cholera did not make its appearance again. Land was at that time selling in La Salle county for ten dollars an acre. Ole Canuteson s father had only five hundred dollars, and did not dare to run in debt for a Tarm and stock and implements, and he contemplated going to Iowa, where land was to be had for less money. In the meantime they had left the school-house and were living at the house of Halvor Knudson, and while they were considering what was best to do, Kleng Peerson came there one day. He had just returned from a journey to Texas, and he was chock full of stories of that wonderland. He said land could be bought in Dallas county, Texas, with as deep and as black soil as that of Illinois for fifty cents per

acre, and he told the truth. The result was that they resolved to take Kleng Peerson's advice, and he agreed to go with them. In the midst of these discussions as to where to locate, Ole Canuteson, young as he was. Married a young lady of his own age, Miss Ellen Maline Gunderson, a girl who also had come from the famous Karino. 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 Thronhjelm. 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 Canuteson's wife and the three children that he was to bring to their grandparents. By the time they all got united again it was Christmas. The Canutesons bought 320 acres of land from a man who had received 640 acres from the state for living on it. The price was fifty cents per acre, and it was located ten miles south of Dallas. In Dallas there were then only a few houses along the river. They broke twenty acres, and hauled rails six miles to fence them in with. They built a tolerably good house, sawing the planks for it themselves with a whipsaw. In 1852 the Texas legislature again resolved to donate land to actual settlers who had not already received land in that way. Now it was the Canutesons' turn to get land without paying for it, and this opportunity must not be neglected. In August, 1853, Ole Canuteson and one of his American neighbors left Dallas to look for land. Vacant land was found by them near Bosque river, a tributary of the Brazas. The county was afterwards organized as Bosque county. This land suited them, and Ole Canuteson selected about 300 acres for himself and a similar amount for his father. Later many families came there from the other Norwegian settlements, all getting land for nothing or buying it for a small price from those who had homesteads. The Canutesons sold their land in Dallas and moved to Bosque, and Kleng Peerson went with them as he was now, so to speak, one of the family. Ole Canuteson's father had married in the mean time a girl from the Brownsboro settlement in Henderson county. The next year a ship from Arendal in Norway brought a lot of emigrants, and many of them came direct to Bosque. The following persons have been mentioned to me as the first Norwegian settlers in Bosque county, Texas: Ole Canuteson, with family; Canute Canuteson; Ole Peerson; Kleng Peerson, single; Carl Qvstad, with family; Jens Ringnes; Jens Jenson; Mrs. Annie Bronstad; Ole Ween, single; Andrew Bretten, single, the first Norwegian that died in the settlement; Andrew Huse, single. Among later-comers to Bosque county are mentioned Henrik Dahl, with family; B. E. Swenson; O. Calwick; O. Olson; O. Johnson; P. Poulson. Many left the older settlements in Texas and came to Bosque, and others came either direct from Norway or from Illinois, and before many years it became the largest Norwegian settlement in Texas, which it still is. It is to be said with emphasis in regard to the Norwegian settlers in Texas that they made very poor rebels during the civil war, but of course they had to be discreet, witness the fate of Mr. Wserenskjoeld. Mr. and Mrs. O. Canuteson have had six children, of which five are living, four daughters and one son. The daughters are all married, and the son is still single.

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

#### Bosque County

The third Norwegian settlement in Texas is in Bosque County, stretching from Clifton westward to Cranfills Gap, with Norse as the center. Ole Canuteson was the founder of this settlement, in 1853. Canuteson had gotten the America Fever in 1842, when as a ten-year old boy he listened to Kleng Peerson's stories about America. In 1850 his parents resolved to go. They reached New York, Buffalo and Chicago, but on the way to Ottawa on a canal boat his good mother died of the cholera. Kleng Peerson was at La Salle, just back from Texas and full of its praises. So the Canutesons and some others followed Kleng to Texas. They bought land at fifty cents an acre. In 1852 the

Texas Legislature resolved to give land to actual settlers. Ole Canuteson found vacant land in 1853 in Bosque County, near the Bosque River, and in that rich and beautiful spot a Norwegian settlement was then established which flourishes to this day. Down there they still speak the Norwegian language. They have Norwegian congregations and a Norwegian college, Clifton College, founded in 1896, whose president is Carl Tyssen, A. M. Cleng Peerson lies buried there—at Norse. T. T. Colwick is the postmaster at Norse; J. K. Rystad, the Lutheran pastor.

#### A history of the Norwegians of Illinois (1905)

Elmer Baldwin's History of La Salle County gives the following list, which we offer for comparison: Oliver Canuteson came to New York, in 1825; to Illinois in 1834; died in 1850; he left two sons and one daughter; one son died in the army in 1863.