

Family History Notes

Winter 2024

The Memoirs of Thor Kittleson (1843-1933)

In 1926, Thor Kittleson, a longtime resident of the Town of Perry, Dane County, Wisconsin, reminisced about his life in a three-part newspaper series. He wrote these engaging memoirs at the age of 83, six years before his death in 1933. Thor arrived in Wisconsin with his parents Kittle and Margit (Lee) Kittleson in 1850 and in the Town of Perry in 1855. He married Aaste Haavrud in 1865 and they farmed adjacent to his parents' farm in what was to become known as Kittleson Valley on Kittleson Valley Creek. Thor and Aaste were buried in the Perry Lutheran Cemetery in nearby Daleyville. The Kittleson immigrant stories and experiences are shared by many other Wisconsin immigrants of that era, not necessarily Norwegian. Thor's memoirs are reprinted below including my annotations (the footnotes) with minor editorial changes for spelling and readability.

Thor Kittleson Memoirs Part 1: Old Pioneer Sketches the Frontier Days and Why New Comers Then Made Better Citizens Than New Comers of Today

By Thor Kittleson

Printed August 2, 1926 in the *Blanchardville Blade* newspaper.

I have now lived in the United States 79 years - nearly four-fifths of a century. I have lived here more than half of the history of this country since the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. When we came to America in 1850, James K. Polk was president. From Polk to Hoover includes 20 of the 31 presidents of the United States. Since I came here we have had 20 presidents, and before I came there had been only 11 presidents.¹ At that time there were only 30 states in the Union. After I came here 18 more states have been added.

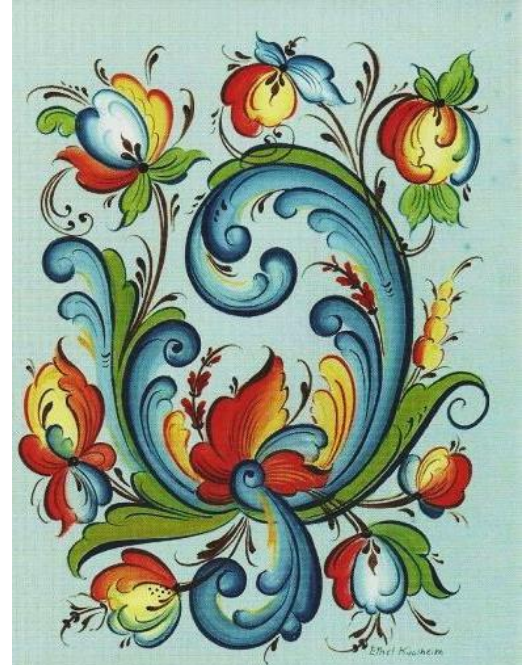


Figure 1 Telemark-style rosemaling by the late Ethel Kvalheim of Stoughton, WI.

When I came here there were very few states west of the Mississippi River and most of the country west of that river was the "Wild West." During my life-time all of that great territory has become a part of the Union, and all of the land fit for use, and much that is not fit for use, has been taken up, and has actual settlers living upon it. And when our own West was filled up, thousands of our people went into Canada to look for cheap land and new homes.

For many years the pioneers thought the forests were in the way. What they wanted and needed was cleared land and they had very little use at first for the timber. As the forests extended thousands of miles in all directions, and covered millions of square miles of land, we thought we had enough timber to last forever. After a few years of grubbing, clearing and wasting and burning we found that nearly all our good timber was gone. Now the State and Federal governments are planting trees on the lands from which the pioneer and the lumber companies cut off the timber.

¹ Thor made a small error since James K. Polk's presidency ended on March 4, 1849 – thus before the Kittlesons had arrived in America in 1850. But he was correct that he had lived through 20 presidents from Zachary Taylor to Herbert Hoover. Thor Kittleson died just weeks before the inauguration of FDR on March 4, 1933.

As I have lived in this country from [Presidents] Polk to Hoover, from the ox team to the gasoline engine, from the lumber wagon to the automobile from the tallow candle to the electric light, from the stage coach to the flying machine, from mud roads to concrete highways, from the scythe to the mower, from the cradle to the combined harvester and thrasher, and as I have seen small towns grow into enormous cities, whose products and whose name is known in the whole world, it seems to me as I look back over 80 years of life in America that I have lived in an age of marvels and miracles. Without comparison the greatest period in the history of the world, and I thank God that I was permitted to live and work in such an age and in such a country.

Not only were my wife and I permitted to live through the life of the pioneer, not only were we permitted to help lay the foundation of this country, but we helped to build it up to what it is today. And now we have been permitted to live here for many years after the building is finished.



Figure 2 Brunkeberg Church, Kviteseid, in the Telemark region of Norway

It may be that some of the things I have seen and lived through will be of interest to those of our people whose memory does not reach back to the days of the pioneer. There are millions of people in this country who never drove an ox team, never heard the hum of a spinning wheel, who never had to read by the light of a tallow candle, and who never wore clothing of homemade cloth, that was made by their mothers on a hand loom at home, from wool sheared from the sheep on the home farm. There were no middle-men

in the clothing business then. Our clothing came direct from the sheep in the pasture to our own backs.

I was born on September 5, 1843, at Kviteseid, Telemarken², Norway, a few miles from the well-known Brunkeberg church. My father was Kittle Anstenson Staulen³. My mother was Margit Thorsdatter Lee⁴. The family name "Stolen" came from the farm on which my father lived as a tenant.⁵

I had two brothers, Ole and Kittle⁶. Ole died a number of years ago at Kensett, Iowa. Kittle is still living at Blanchardville, Wisconsin. I had two sisters; both named Ingeborg, because that was the name of both of my grandmothers. One of them was married to Juul Knudtson Haavrud, my wife's brother. She died many years ago. The other was married to Ivar Berg, and died at Kensett, Iowa, about five years ago.⁷

² Telemarken (or Telemark) was a region and county of Norway. In 2020, Telemark and Vestfold, another region and county, formed the new county of Telemark og Vestfold.

³ Also known as Kjetil Ansteinson Stolen.

⁴ Spelled Lie in Norway.

⁵ Historic Perry records refer to this branch of the Kittleson family as Kittleson-Ansteinson-Staulen. Some of Thor and Aaste's sons took the Kittleson surname and some went by the surname Stolen.

⁶ Known as Kittle K. Kittleson of Blanchardville.

⁷ Thor's brother Ole and brother-in-law Iver Berg both served in the Wisconsin 46th Infantry in the Civil War— the same company as several New Glarus men such as Oswald Babler, Thomas Duerst and Martin Disch. Both Ole Kittleson and Iver Berg farmed near Kensett, IA. Iver Berg, married to Thor's sister, was a brother to Mikkel Berg (see footnote #27) who was married to Barbro Haavrud, Aaste Kittleson's sister.

We sailed for New York from Kragerø⁸, Norway, in the summer of 1850. We were on the sea 8 weeks and 2 days. When I state that the price of the ticket from Norway to Milwaukee was only \$13 for each person, you will understand why we had to take along enough food to last all the way. On the whole trip no one died and no one was born.

After landing in New York we were taken to Buffalo in a canal boat⁹ that was pulled by horses walking on the bank. From Buffalo we were taken across the lakes to Milwaukee. On the boat we were badly treated by the crew who pushed us around as if we were cattle. I was very young then but I can still remember a big Negro on the boat who was very kind to us - much kinder than the white folks. He gave us some potatoes and patted my head. Perhaps that is the reason I have always had a liking for the Negroes.

At the time we emigrated from Norway so many renters and laboring people were leaving for America the landholders and official classes were worried that wages might go up and that there would not be enough common people left to do Norway's rough, hard work. So they did what is always done in such cases. They tried to make the people believe that America was a terrible country in which to live. As a result of this propaganda many people in Norway at that time actually believed that the United States consisted chiefly of scalping Indians, wild animals, rattlesnakes, tornados, swamps, malaria germs, cholera epidemics and Yankees. And the worst of all was the Yankee¹⁰. In fact some of the immigrants at that time had about the same idea of the Yankee as the southern slaves had at the time of the Civil War - that they had horns, tails and claws.

On the road from Milwaukee to Dane county we were to have our first encounter with the terrible Yankee. A sudden rain drove us for shelter into a farmer's home. It was a Yankee home, too, but we were very cordially received by the Yankee wife. I was only seven years old then, but I can still remember as clearly as though it all happened only a few days ago how the house was furnished and how neat and clean it was. I can see the curtains on the windows and beds.

The Yankee wife set out for us a large pan of sweet milk with the cream on, and some white bread. We had not had much else to eat since we left Norway than the food we had taken with us and that had become very stale. We all agreed that we had never eaten a meal that tasted better than that milk and bread of the Yankee farmer's wife. And when we left she could not be made to take any money in payment for her hospitality. She did not act or look anything like Yankees we had heard about in Norway. But then, of course, she was a woman. The men might be different.

Our first home in America was in a log house near what is now Rockdale¹¹, in Dane county. At that time it was called Clinton. My father's first work was husking corn for a Yankee farmer, a Mr. Perry, who lived across the [county] line in Rock County. Notwithstanding the hospitality of the Yankee wife on the road from Milwaukee, my mother still had her fears, doubts and misgivings, and still remembered some of the stories she had heard and read in Norway. She was very much worried all that first day that my father worked for the Yankee farmer.

When my father reported for work he took off his hat to the Yankee farmer, as he had been accustomed to do in Norway when meeting a man of a higher social order than himself. The Yankee made him

⁸ A city which lies on the Skagerrak Strait on Norway's southeastern coast.

⁹ By way of the Erie Canal.

¹⁰ The term Yankee is of unknown origin first used by the British as a pejorative referring to the New Englanders. The New Englanders then adopted the term to describe themselves - shrewd, thrifty and conservative.

¹¹ Rockdale was located in the area known as the Koshkonong Prairie, an early settlement site of Norwegian immigrants.

understand that in this country all noble women are ladies and all honest men are lords, and that while he should tip his hat to the ladies, he should not do so to the men.

While husking his first corn that forenoon¹² my father thought a great deal about what the Yankee farmer had told him. It was hard to believe and understand even though he had come here for the very reason that here we were all supposed to be equal. When he came to the house at noon he looked around for the place where he should eat. When asked to come into the house and eat with the family he hesitated. And when he, a poor, penniless tenant from Norway, was asked to sit down at the table, between the Yankee farmer and his wife, to eat white bread on a white table cloth, he at first refused and had to be urged to take his place at the table.

That afternoon, in the cornfield, my father had some more things to think about. And when his work for the day was done he hurried home to his wife and children knowing that mother was worried. Proudly and in glowing words he told of his cordial reception by the Yankee farmer. When he had finished his story he said (and I can remember his words very clearly) "Let us all thank God for bringing us here to this blessed land of America."



Figure 3 from left, Aaste, Thor (author of this memoir), Kittle T. and Kenneth Kittleson at a family reunion in 1911.

At that time my father could hardly speak a word of English; he knew little of its history or of its constitution which had been adopted only 63 years before that. But the moment he was asked to be seated at a table, with a white cloth and white bread on, with the American landowner and

his family - the moment he was treated as a man and an equal, regardless of the fact that he was just a new comer, without property, and had nothing but these two rough, but strong and willing hands - from that moment he was completely Americanized. From that time on, and to the end of his days, he was a better and more patriotic American citizen than many who had been born and educated in this county, and who were acquainted with this country's history, language and institutions.

And it was in such a home - Norwegian in language, manners, customs - but American in heart, spirit, love and sympathy, that I was brought up. The result was that I, too, became an intensely patriotic American even from my earliest childhood.

In my father's experience is a lesson of great importance to our government at the present time in the matter of the Americanization of our immigrants. During recent years the laws relating to citizenship papers have been made much stricter.¹³ A longer residence is required, the applicant must be able to read some English, and he must know something about our form of government and institutions. And yet, notwithstanding all this many of our new citizens remain foreign at heart even after getting their papers and after taking the oath of allegiance to our government.

¹² Forenoon, a somewhat old fashioned way of saying morning, derived from *formiddag* and *vormittag* in Norwegian and German, respectively. I remember this term being used in circa 1960 New Glarus when an elderly neighbor asked me if my Kindergarten class was in the forenoon or afternoon.

¹³ Likely referring to the Immigration Act of 1924 which established immigration quotas and restrictions.

That is probably because the immigrants who have come in later years have not received such a hearty welcome as my father did, they are not now always treated as equals by our citizens; they are neither wanted no needed as badly as were the new comers in 1850. Then we did not have enough people. Now we have too many.

But it remains true that the best, quickest and surest way to Americanize our immigrants is to treat them right when they come here. Before they come they have all heard so much about the greatness of America; about our high wages, about our free government, and our great opportunities. When they land here they have high hopes and expectations. They expect to be received with outstretched arms on our part, to be treated as equals, and to be able to make a fortune in a few years.

If the newcomers are given a square deal and treated with respect and consideration, they will be satisfied with America and become good citizens even though they may not be able to speak English and may know very little about our government. If they are not treated fairly when they come here they are greatly disappointed, become bitter against our country and government, and many will become anarchists and criminals.

I have always been in favor of changing over to the use of the English language as rapidly as conditions demanded both in the church, school and in other ways. Now most of the third generation of the immigrants is unable to speak anything but English. And that is as it should be.

Memoirs of Thor Kittleson Part 2: Old Pioneer Sketches the Frontier Days Tells of Interesting Occurrences and Quaint Customs

By Thor Kittleson

Printed August 9, 1926 in the *Blanchardville Blade* newspaper.

Soon after making our home near Clinton¹⁴ two things happened that would have taken away the last trace of prejudice I might have had against the Yankees, if any had remained. At one time, while I was still a young boy I had caught a dozen quail and sold them to a man in Stoughton who was not a Yankee for twenty-five cents for the whole dozen. Then I met a Yankee, and when I told him I had gotten only twenty-five cents for the quail, he got angry because I had been so badly cheated. Then I took them back and resold them for \$1.50.



Figure 4 Hauge Church built by Norwegian immigrants in 1852 in Daleyville, WI.

A short time after that I was plowing by the roadside. A Yankee farmer came along the road with a load of wheat on his wagon. He got stuck in a mud hole. When his horses could not pull the load out he asked me to help him. I hitched my oxen to the load and pulled it out. Then he handed me a new silver half dollar. It was the first money I had ever earned, and I took it out of my pocket a great many times to look at it. And I must confess I hoped some other farmer would come along and get stuck in the

And another one did soon come, and he did get stuck in the same place. And sure enough, he called me to come and help him. I did so cheerfully hoping to get some more money. But instead of giving me money for helping him he scolded me for not fixing the road. And he was not a Yankee.

¹⁴ Rockdale, Dane County

After this experience I can understand the motives of some of our modern farmers, who we are told, carry water into mud holes at night in order to pull out automobiles by day.

Our first home had been on what was known as the Funkelien farm about two miles from the present village of Rockdale. From there we moved to what was known as the Auby farm in the Town of Pleasant Springs¹⁵. As rent, father gave the owner of the farm three bushels of wheat per acre, and one-half of the hay.

In 1850 my father had his choice of taking a bushel of corn or twenty-five cents per day for wages. A little later we paid 50 cents per pound for salt and got from 25 to 35 cents per bushel for wheat.

In 1855 we moved to the Town of Perry, Dane County, where I lived until I retired from farming. We paid \$160 for the first 60 acres of land bought in Perry. I had \$100 and borrowed the \$60 on which I paid 15 per cent interest. Some paid as much as 60 per cent on their loans.

At about this time my sister was confirmed, and father traded wheat for calico for a dress for her, getting two yards calico for each bushel wheat. There was hardly any money among the early settlers and they traded what they raised for what they had to buy.

While we were still living near Clinton father bought a heifer in the Town of Springdale from Kittle Luraas for which he paid \$12. He paid for the heifer by cutting rails for 50 cents per 100.



Figure 5 Plaque marking the site of the early Norwegian burials in the Town of Perry, Dane County.

The first two years after we moved to Perry we lived in a log house with a sod roof. At one time grandfather¹⁶ was sick and we found a large rattlesnake lying in his bed. With a long stick my brother Ole threw the snake out of doors.

My grandfather¹⁷, who died about five years after we came to America, served in the Seven years' war¹⁸. I may add in this connection that he was a member of the army of Norway and served as a guard when the last witch was burned at the stake in Norway.¹⁹

The first settlers had no machinery of any kind, and all work had to be done by hand. At first the grain was threshed by flail or under the feet of oxen, and was cleaned by pouring from a tree on a windy

¹⁵ Town of Pleasant Springs, Dane County is also located in the Koshkonong Prairie area

¹⁶ Referring to maternal grandfather Thor Rollevson Lie (or Tor Rollefson Lee), 1781-1856, who was buried in an early Norwegian burial ground on Lee Valley Road. The burials were unmarked but many years later a plaque was erected. The burial site was recorded with the Burial Sites Commission of the Wisconsin Historical Society by Stanley Kittleson, the great-great grandson of Thor Lee.

¹⁷ Referring to paternal grandfather Anstein Kjetilson Blikom, 1771-1848 (source geni.com)

¹⁸ (from Wikipedia) The Seven Years' War (1756-1763) was a global conflict that involved most of the European great powers (including Sweden which then controlled Norway), and was fought in Europe, The Seven Years' War (1756–1763) was a global conflict that involved most of the European great powers, and was fought primarily in Europe, the Americas and the Asia-Pacific.

¹⁹ Thor's maternal grandfather Lee was born several years after the Seven Year's War. Perhaps Thor was referring to an older ancestor who had served in the Seven Years' War. Or perhaps he was referring to another conflict in the early 1800s. Likewise, Tor's grandfather Lee was born many years before 1715 when the last recorded woman in Norway was found guilty of witchcraft.

day.²⁰ The first threshing machine was operated by tread power, and we had to rake the straw out by hand. We used bent pins for fish hooks. At first wages were 25 cents per day. As there was no money, wages were paid in grain or other food stuffs. It is much easier to make \$10 now than \$1 then.

Sometimes when men were hired to work on the farm it was agreed that in addition to wages the hired man was to have free whiskey. Whiskey was very cheap then and a jug of it was sometimes taken into the field, and a drink was taken every so often. When they were cutting hay with a scythe they went around the field and would stop and take a drink of whiskey each time around. Perhaps that made some of them work faster as they were anxious to get back to the jug.

It was customary to have whiskey in the house to treat guests at certain festivals and holidays, and especially at Christmas-time. At one time father had bought a jug of whiskey for Christmas. There was no end board in his sleigh box, and when he got home he found that the jug had fallen out. He started to walk back toward Madison where he found it lying in the snow several miles back. It was a low grade of



Figure 6 Sketch of rock outcrops along Kittleson Valley Creek

liquor, had partly frozen so the jug had cracked off right at the surface of the whiskey. Father brought home the broken jug with the partly frozen liquor, thawed it out, and we had Christmas as usual.

At that time it was the custom among the Norwegian settlers to always give a caller something, either to eat or drink. There was an Irish family in our neighborhood. They knew about this custom, but they were very poor. One day when my father called at their house, the wife handed him a cold boiled potato as evidence of her hospitality.

As I said before, money was very scarce, and there was very little that we could buy at the stores. But we had plenty to eat and lived well. In the early 50's there was no price on potatoes. There were so many of them that anyone could have all he wanted for the digging. Many were left in the ground. In fact, for several years, there was no price for anything we had to sell. The markets were so far away that often the price received for grain and other farm crops did not pay the expenses of the trip.

The early settlers were generally good neighbors and helped each other in many ways. My father could do a great many things that he had learned in Norway. He was a carpenter, shoemaker, blacksmith, and he could make charcoal and tar. In Norway he had been a tenant and the most grain he ever had in one year was 16 bushels. In Norway his wages had been four cents a day and in summer 25 cents a day.

In the course of time I became the owner of 460 acres of land. Much of it was covered with timber when I bought it and cleared it at least 270 acres in all. We used oxen for many years after we moved to Perry and hauled a great many loads of wheat and other things to Madison and Monroe.

²⁰ Winnowing used the wind to remove the chaff from the grain.

When we went to market several neighbors would go on the same day and travel together. On one of the coldest days of the winter I was going to Madison. My wife handed me a new pair of heavy woolen stockings that she had knitted. I put them on but could not get my boots on. So I took by pocket knife, cut off the toe and heel of the new hose, to the horror of my wife, and put on my boots and went to Madison. For many years I knew nothing about overshoes or overcoats. When we got cold riding we got off and walked or even ran foot races to keep warm. Sometimes we could not afford to stop at hotels so we slept in hay stacks or straw piles overnight.

One year while we lived near Clinton the wheat crop failed entirely. The next spring father had to sell his oxen in order to buy seed wheat. One year I sowed 44 bushels of very good seed wheat and harvested 16 bushels of very poor wheat.

For a while land was sold by the government at \$1.25 per acre. Then it was cut to 50 cents per acre. Then the speculators bought up most of it.

After we moved to Perry I started to attend public school. I had been in school half a day when I was called home to help find our cattle which had gotten lost in the woods. I never went back after that. I attended parochial school one week. That was all the schooling I ever had. I did not learn how to write until after I was 21 and married, and did not learn arithmetic until later than that.

My grandfather was my teacher in religion, and the quality of his teaching may be judged from the fact that I stood at the head of the class on confirmation day.

Memoirs of Thor Kittleson Part 3: Frontier Life As Told By Old Resident Tells of Interesting Occurrences and Early Pioneer Life

By Thor Kittleson

Printed August 16, 1926 in the *Blanchardville Blade* newspaper.

On January 3, 1865 I was married to Aaste Haavrud²¹ by Rev. Brodahl. My wife is still living and is 83 years of age. She was born in Northern Aurdahl, Valdres, Norway²², and came to this country when she was 16. We have had 12 children, 8 of whom grew up and seven of whom are still living. While on the ship crossing the Atlantic my wife needed some water. Instead of asking the sailors or the men to get it for her, she took a pail, climbed down a ladder on the outside of the ship, leaned down and dipped a pail full of water out of the ocean, and then climbed back up the ladder. This act on the part of my wife, then only 16 years old, shows how brave and fearless the old pioneers were.

In the early times there were only three Republican voters in the Town of Perry. They were O.B. Dahle²³, my father and my brother, Ole. Ole had worked for a Mr. Miller who lived on Wheeler Prairie.²⁴ Miller was a Free Soiler²⁵ and had converted Ole to the new party. Ole in turn converted father.

²¹ Surname variations include Havrud, Hovrud and Hoverud.

²² Nord-Aurdal, Valdres, Norway in the present-day county of Innlandet.

²³ Storekeeper Onun Bjornson Dahle for whom Daleyville is named.

²⁴ Near Stoughton, WI.

²⁵ The Free Soil Party was a short-lived coalition political party in the United States active from 1848 to 1854, when it merged into the Republican Party. The party was largely focused on the single issue of opposing the expansion of slavery into the western territories of the United States. (copied from Wikipedia)

There were some Copperheads²⁶ in Perry, during the Civil War. At one time I was helping a neighbor thresh grain. An officer came to serve some draft papers. There was talk about the war, and about Lincoln. A young girl said that Lincoln should be hanged, and some of the men agreed with her and declared that Lincoln was a great butcher. Although I was still a young man, I protested rather vigorously against such disloyal language with the result that one of the Copperheads threw a cup of hot coffee at me.

In 1865 the war was not yet over. A general draft was expected and most of the men in Perry enlisted, among them my brother, Ole. I took him to Madison. There we met a man who took Ole by the hand and mournfully expressed his regrets, and asked if the big butcher at Washington had not gotten enough men yet. Ole spent a few months in Alabama shooting hogs and sheep for the army.

Mikkel Bergh²⁷ who was married to my wife's sister was drafted. He was compelled to join his regiment and leave his wife and children within two hours after his wife had given birth to a child. And there was no one to look after his wife, children and farm except my wife, then a young girl. My wife had a brother who enlisted in the Union army a short time after coming to America. While in the South he was taken sick, came home and died. He was only one of many newcomers who gave their lives for their adopted country soon after coming here.

During the panic of 1857 we sold wheat for 41 cents a bushel. Dressed pork, peddled at Madison, brought only 2 1/4 cents a pound. Eggs went down to 4 cents a dozen, and butter to 6 cents per pound. Three years later we got \$16 for pork and \$3 for wheat.

In religious matters I have been liberal and broadminded. I have no prejudice whatever against people who belong to their denominations. In a country where there is no state church and where we have religious liberty it is natural that there should be a great many denominations. But it is inconsistent that there should be any fighting and hard feeling among them.

When we claim for ourselves the right to worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience, we must, in order to be fair, grant the same right to others. When the principle is once accepted there is no room for intolerance. For no fair man will claim for himself a right in such matters that he will not give to others.

I believe that all churches that teach salvation through Christ are Christian and fundamentally right. Other things do not matter as they are mostly matters of detail and ceremony.²⁸

It has always seemed to me that too much stress has been placed on faith and too little on good works. We sometimes forget that a good tree cannot bring forth rotten fruit, and that we should show our faith by our works. I have no faith in a man's Christianity if his wife and children, horses and cattle do not get any benefit from it.

²⁶ In the 1860, the Copperheads, also known as Peace Democrats, were a faction of the Democratic Party in the Union who opposed the American Civil War and wanted an immediate peace settlement with the Confederates. (copied from Wikipedia)

²⁷ Mikkel and Barbro (Haavrud) Berg were the grandparents of Morrion Berg of Blanchardville.

²⁸ Norwegian-American Lutheranism formed into two factions – one based on the Norwegian state church and one based on the beliefs of Hans Nielsen Hauge. The state church stressed high church doctrines and principles, while the Haugians stressed democratic attitudes and faithfulness to scripture. The Norwegians in the Towns of Perry, York and Primrose each had split into two Lutheran churches in the late nineteenth century, each with a cemetery. The two separate Lutheran congregations in Perry, York and Primrose have each reverted to one Lutheran church. A New Glarus Lutheran congregation, Shepherd of the Hills, was begun in the early 1960s and built its church on Kittleson's Hill.



Figure 7 Perry Lutheran Church, Daleyville, WI. The congregation continues to thrive despite lightning strikes, fires and a tornado.

Nothing pleases me more than to see how friendly and neighborly the people of all the different churches are in the place where I live. Intolerance seems to be a thing of the past with most of them. For instance, one year the Catholic priest is asked to speak to the high school graduates, the next year the Methodist preacher, and the next the Lutheran pastor. And the class goes from one church to the other. At Ladies' Aids members of all the churches get together. At last, after many hundred years of fighting we seem to have gotten the idea that we all have one God, one Savior, and that we hope to gather at last

in the same heaven of eternal rest.

And when people of the different churches get together in one place you cannot tell them apart. There is cooperation and harmony, understanding and good will, and no one seems to be afraid of being contaminated by the others.²⁹ This does not mean that we should not have our own beliefs and doctrines and be loyal to our own church. But it does mean that we should be fair to others, and be ready to give them the same rights that we claim for ourselves, and that we respect the spirit of free America.

I have generally been in favor of the Union of the different branches of my church into a larger body. One reason for that is that the difference in doctrines is so small that very few people know what it is. And then a larger body can afford better schools and seminaries, and in many ways do better work. But I do not believe in union at the expense of the power of the people and the congregations. I believe thoroughly in democracy - in the rule of the people - in the government of the church as well as in the government of the state. Sometimes one result of a big organization is that too much power gets into the hands of a few men at the top.

And now, of the many sturdy pioneers who came to the town of Perry in the early days, my wife and I and four or five others, are all that remain among the living. Many fell in the struggle between the pioneer and the wilderness. But the pioneers always won all along the whole line. Each year the stubborn forests grew smaller and the clearings a little larger. And new streams of recruits always came to take the place of those who fell by the wayside before we got to the end of the long hard journey.

Large numbers were carried away by the cholera. Many died on Southern fields of battle, while following the flag under whose protection they had hoped to find a home, freedom and happiness. They gave their lives in order that others might be free, and that others might be happier. Many lived on until the struggle of the pioneer was over and won. They lived to see the splendid structure built upon the foundations which they laid with so much effort, and which was sometimes cemented with tears. They

²⁹ The Town of Perry had the Perry Lutheran Church, the Hauge Evangelical Lutheran Church (razed in 1981), the original Hauge Church (preserved but no longer in use) and the Holy Redeemer Catholic Church. Nearby villages of Blanchardville and Mt. Horeb have Lutheran, Methodist and Roman Catholic congregations

lived to see their children and their grandchildren take possession of a heritage richer by far than any other that ever passed from one generation to another.³⁰

The early settlers in America had the strength and weakness, the virtues and the vices of their class. On the whole they were brave, fearless, generous, hospitable and frugal, and tried to do their duty. They lacked all the inventions and conveniences and luxuries that we have today; but they were also saved from much of the excitement, hurry, worry and nervousness from which people suffer today. True, they worked hard, suffered many hardships, but in general they were cheerful, happy and enjoyed life.

And now, as I am about to bring this short story of my long life in America to a close, it is but natural that I should turn, just for a moment, from the past to the future. What does the future hold in store for our country? How will the next 80 years compare with the last 80 years? Will there be so many changes, so much progress, so many new inventions, such a large increase in wealth and population as there has been between 1850 and 1929?

No one can tell. No one knows. But after what I have seen and experienced since I came to America I am prepared to expect most anything in the line of invention and discovery. Who could have predicted in 1850 when we traveled with oxen at the rate of 4 or 5 miles an hour that in 1929 men would be able to stay in the air in a flying machine 420 hours, and not come down to earth until after they had traveled the distance around the world?

But all the new things, inventions, ideas and ways of living in which we call our modern civilization, is by no means an unmixed blessing. On the whole, the world is of course very much better than it was in 1850. There is more wealth and it is easier to get, more general education, more traveling. We live in better homes, they are better lighted and better heated and much more convenient. Most of the hard work that was done by hand then is done by machinery now. Then the grain was sown by hand, cut by hand and threshed by hand. Now all that is done by machinery, horses or tractors, and the farmer simply rides in a seat driving the team or operating the tractor.

Then life was very simple, our food, our clothing and our ways of living were plain and simple. Now life is so complex, and in many ways so confused. The people and the statesmen of today have many problems to solve and many new evils to contend with that the early pioneers knew nothing of.

The pioneers who planned and prayed, grubbed and cleared and drained, who laid the foundations for, and started to build what we today are proud to call America, did their work faithfully and well. If the present generation, the children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren of the pioneers, will be equally faithful, self-sacrificing in their work of preserving and improving this great heritage, in solving the pressing problems of today, and in removing the evils that have come with changing conditions, then the future of America will be safe in their hands.

And it is my belief, my hope and my prayer that the present and coming generations will so discharge their duties and maintain their rights that - "When the forefathers look back upon the earth, They may recognize their heritage and their people."

³⁰ The Thor and Aaste Kittleson homestead is now owned and operated by their great-great grandson Darren Kittleson. Darren has named the farm the Brunkeberg-Kviteseid farm in honor of the Kittleson family home villages in Norway.

Capital Times newspaper, January 12, 1930:

Wed 65 Years; Blanchardville Couple Feted

BLANCHARDVILLE - Mr. and Mrs. Thor Kittleson of this place had the unusual honor or celebrating their 65th wedding anniversary here recently. Both are in good health, and Mr. Kittleson stands six feet plus when he rises to speak. Their pastor, the Rev. J. H. Myrwang, Daleyville, conducted appropriate devotion and gave an address in honor of the couple's anniversary to which Mr. Kittleson responded. K. H. Stolen also spoke as did Albert Kittleson.

Others present were Mr. and Mrs. K. T. Kittleson, Mrs. K. H. Stolen, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Anderson, Mr. and Mrs. William Kittleson and sons, Truman, Byron, Everett, Stanley and daughter Lillian; Mrs. William Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Helgeson and daughters, Agnes and June, Mrs. Myrwang, and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Jacobson and son Donald, Alma Olson, and Mr. and Mrs. Olaus Kellesvig, and Anton Lindflott.

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[Link](#) to Historic Perry published history with photographs of the Kittleson family on pages 124 to 126 and a map of farmsteads and cheese factories on page 118.
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Figure 8 Telemark-style rosemaling by the late Marlys Hammer.