



LESSON 4

Broken Dreams

BIG IDEAS

- Early logging, the resultant cutover, attempts to change land use, and the reforestation of pre-existing forest lands were activities that contributed to the need for forestry.

(Subconcept 21)

- The lumber era shaped Wisconsin's economic, cultural, social, and environmental landscapes. Influences of this time period are still visible in Wisconsin today. (Subconcept 22)

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Recall that fire was used to clear land after logging during the cutover era and many of these fires became catastrophic events.
- Discuss why the soils and climate of northern Wisconsin were not well-suited for farming.
- Explain why abandoned farmland in Wisconsin in the early 1900s became public land.

SUBJECT AREAS

Language Arts, Social Studies

LESSON/ACTIVITY TIME

- Total Lesson Time: 120 minutes
- Time Breakdown:
 - Introduction.....5 minutes
 - Activity110 minutes
 - Conclusion.....5 minutes

TEACHING SITE

Classroom

NUTSHELL

In this lesson, students become members of a family that moves to Wisconsin to farm “the cutover.” They study photographs, letters, and documents to determine whether their family was able to make it farming “the cutover.”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

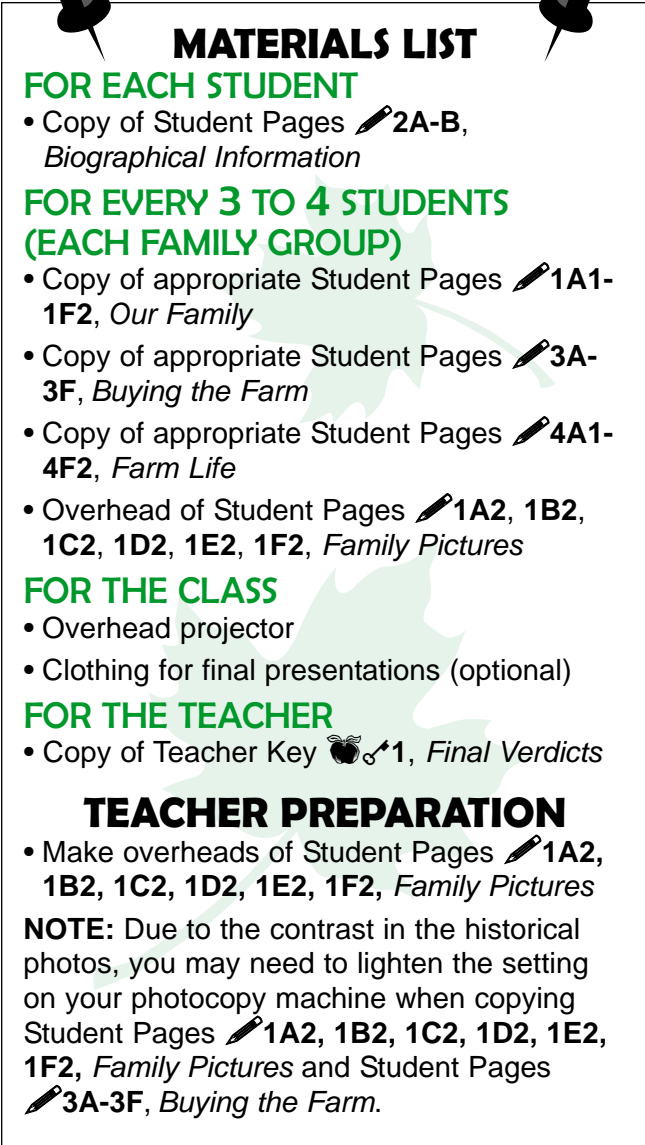
What would you do if you had a large piece of property you no longer had a use for, and had no means to generate income from the property to pay the taxes? You most likely would try to unload or dispose of the property. As lumber companies cut all the trees from the northwoods of Wisconsin, they were left with vast land holdings incapable of producing marketable timber for another 70 to 100 years. Rather than continuing to pay the property taxes, these lumber companies either put the land up for sale or let the property become **tax delinquent**.

Suddenly **land speculation** was big business in northern Wisconsin. Lumber companies, the railroads, land speculator companies, local newspapers, colonization companies, the state legislature, and even the University of Wisconsin recruited and courted settlers to come to the area. In those days, no truth in advertising laws existed, so ads and brochures promised that “a farm in Wisconsin will make you money from the start: crops never fail” (Wisconsin Central Railroad). Enticing photographs filled these brochures. One brochure proclaimed: “These pictures show, plainer than words, what an honest man can do in a few years....There are neither cyclones nor blizzards in this part of the country to make life miserable to the pioneer; but a healthy bracing climate rich in productive soil where abundant crops can be raised without fear of drought or other undesirable contingencies.” (Wisconsin Central Railroad)

Private interests were not the only ones caught up in the promotion of **cutover** lands, and likewise, not the only interests stretching the truth. In 1895, the Wisconsin Legislature established a new Board of Immigration (located in Rhinelander) to promote the sale of northern Wisconsin lands to Europeans. That same year, it mandated that the Dean of the College of Agriculture at the University of Wisconsin prepare a bulletin or handbook for homeseekers. The book, entitled *Northern Wisconsin: A Hand-Book for the Homeseeker*, used pictures and accounts of settlers to promote the prosperity possible for those of “sound mind, body, and spirit.” In 1897, 50,000 copies of the handbook were distributed and 60,000 pamphlets, illustrated with pictures from the book, were printed in English, German, and Norwegian.

Although the *Hand-Book for the Homeseeker* was written as a promotional piece, it did provide information on the possible difficulties related to **climate**, **soil type**, and the current condition of the land. It also provided ideas on how to generate capital by working for lumber companies during the winter. Thanks to this book and other promotional brochures and ads, 20,000 new farms were established in 24 of the northernmost counties between 1880 and 1900. According to the *Hand-Book for the Homeseeker*, those invited to farm northern Wisconsin included: sons and farmhands of those farming in southern Wisconsin, those farming in southern Wisconsin who wanted a larger farm, those living in the city who are “tired of hand-to-mouth existence,” those from other states, and those from foreign lands who are “law-abiding and willing supporters of institutions of civilization and progress.”

Of these 20,000 new farms and those that followed in succeeding years, stories of both success and failure were common. The factors



MATERIALS LIST

FOR EACH STUDENT

- Copy of Student Pages ✍️ **2A-B**, *Biographical Information*

FOR EVERY 3 TO 4 STUDENTS (EACH FAMILY GROUP)

- Copy of appropriate Student Pages ✍️ **1A1-1F2**, *Our Family*
- Copy of appropriate Student Pages ✍️ **3A-3F**, *Buying the Farm*
- Copy of appropriate Student Pages ✍️ **4A1-4F2**, *Farm Life*
- Overhead of Student Pages ✍️ **1A2, 1B2, 1C2, 1D2, 1E2, 1F2**, *Family Pictures*

FOR THE CLASS

- Overhead projector
- Clothing for final presentations (optional)

FOR THE TEACHER

- Copy of Teacher Key 🗝️ **1**, *Final Verdicts*

TEACHER PREPARATION

- Make overheads of Student Pages ✍️ **1A2, 1B2, 1C2, 1D2, 1E2, 1F2**, *Family Pictures*

NOTE: Due to the contrast in the historical photos, you may need to lighten the setting on your photocopy machine when copying Student Pages ✍️ **1A2, 1B2, 1C2, 1D2, 1E2, 1F2**, *Family Pictures* and Student Pages ✍️ **3A-3F**, *Buying the Farm*.

that contributed to success included picking the right piece of land (soil type, rocks, stumps, climate), prior experience farming, good health, a family, helpful neighbors, supplemental work availability, frugality, good markets, and a lot of luck. The converse of these all contributed to failure.



VOCABULARY

Climate: Weather conditions for a region including temperature, precipitation, and wind.

Cutover: Land that has been logged. This term is often used as “the cutover,” which refers to northern Wisconsin after it was heavily logged during the period from the 1850s to the 1920s.

Immigrant: A person who has moved to a new area from a different country.

Interest: A fee charged for lending money to someone.

Land Speculation: Buying land with the hopes of selling for a higher price and making a profit.

Mortgage: A loan for the purchase of property that is paid back over a long period of time with interest.

Popple: A term sometimes used for aspen trees.

Slash: Branches, leaves, and twigs left after cutting down a tree.

Soil Type: A way to classify soils, such as sandy, loam, or clay.

Tax Delinquent: Not paying the taxes on your property.

Whether they succeeded or failed, life was hard. Some fields still had standing timber on them and all land needed to be cleared of stumps. Fire was commonly used to clear **slash**, the remains of logged trees. Often smoke filled the air for weeks as fires burned on the landscape. Some of these fires became catastrophic as dry conditions and high winds increased the intensity of the fires. Many a settler was burned out; losing the buildings they had worked so hard to build and the crops they had grown. Most people returned the next year to rebuild. Some weren't as fortunate. In 1871, the Peshtigo fire roared through the woods and took the lives of more than 1,000 people. Although overshadowed by the Great Chicago fire that occurred on the same day, the Peshtigo fire today is considered the nation's greatest catastrophic wildfire event.

In some areas of the cutover, farmers did well. Other regions just weren't meant to be farmed for one or more of the following reasons: the soil was sandy, full of rocks, and the number of days without frost was less than the growing season needed. Often a farm was abandoned, only to be resold to another optimistic immigrant. The last great wave of settlement took place as veterans returned home from World War I in 1918. Shortly thereafter, the Great Depression ended the dreams of many.

As failing farms became tax delinquent, some county governments quickly became the largest landowners. When a landowner didn't pay taxes, a sheriff's auction was scheduled at the courthouse. The land was sold to the highest bidder. Abandoned farmland often had no buyers. These properties had already proven they could not support a family. Unsold land remained with the county as county property. This set the stage for the return of forests in the northwoods.



PROCEDURE

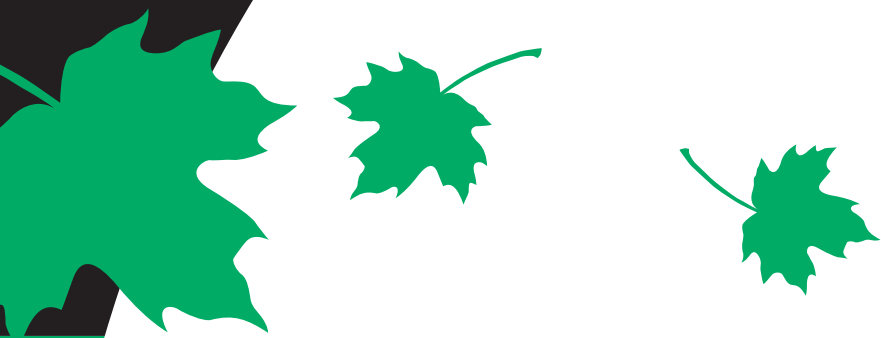
INTRODUCTION

Ask your students if any of them have dreams of doing something someday. Let your students share a few of their dreams. Ask them if they think all dreams come true. Perhaps share a dream of your own that didn't come to fruition. Tell them that during this lesson, they will be learning about the challenges some farm families faced trying to live out their dreams. Review with your students that the forests of Wisconsin were cut down to supply lumber for a growing nation. Ask them if they have an idea what the land was good for after the trees were gone. (*Farming, a new forest, recreation property.*) Tell the students that they are going to learn what it was like to farm this land.

NOTE: The following are fictitious family names, locations, and stories. The hardships and survival strategies presented are based on common experiences of that time period and location.

ACTIVITY

1. Divide the class into groups of three or four and have them arrange their desks so they can work together. Hand out a different copy of Student Pages **1A1-1F2**, *Our Family* to each group. Also provide each group with an overhead of the corresponding Student Page **1A2, 1B2, 1C2, 1D2, 1E2, or 1F2**, *Family Pictures*. If you have a large class, some groups can have duplicates of the same family. Have students study the picture of their family and have someone in each group read the information aloud to the group.
2. After they have read their stories, hand out Student Pages **2A-B**, *Biographical Information* to each student. Ask each group to work together to fill in the biography details on the top half of page A. You may need to help the students with the math to answer the last two questions.
3. Now that the students have had time to become acquainted with their family, ask your students to put themselves in the place of a member of that family. Ask them to dream for a moment about the new life they want as a member of that farm family in northern Wisconsin. After they have had a few minutes to dream, ask your students to record their dream. Ask them to write in the space at the bottom of the Student Page **2A**, *Biographical Information*. This statement should describe what they dream will happen on the farm. Once students have written their statement, have them each share their dreams with the others in their group.
4. Hand out the corresponding Student Pages **3A-3F**, *Buying the Farm* to each group. Have the members of the group study the items on the sheet and take turns reading the information to the group. Once the students have studied the information, have them complete the top half of Student Page **2B**, *Biographical Information* on Buying the Farm.
5. Next, hand out the corresponding Student Pages **4A1-4F2**, *Farm Life* to each group. Have the members of the group take turns reading the letters aloud. Once they have finished reading the letters, have them discuss the questions on the Farm Life section of Student Page **2B**, *Biographical Information*. Once they have discussed their answers as a group, have each member fill in their worksheet.

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6. Give each group time to review Student Pages **2A-B**, *Biographical Information*. Tell them that in a few minutes you want each group to tell the class about their family. They should use Student Pages **2A-B**, *Biographical Information* as an outline for their presentation. (If time permits and you have the technology, you may want the groups to make a PowerPoint presentation. You may also want to provide clothing and props for students to use.) Have each group give their presentation about their family and farming experience to the class. Have each group put up the overhead transparency of their family picture so they may show it as they describe their family's experience. Before you move on to the next group, have the class vote whether they think the family made it farming. Once the class has voted, read the family's fate to the class from Teacher Key **1**, *Final Verdicts*. Continue to the next group, until all groups have presented and all Final Verdicts have been read.

CONCLUSION

Now that each group has presented and the verdicts are in, discuss with your class some of the similarities in the experiences many families had farming. Ask your students about what factors contributed to success. (*Good weather, good soil, work off the farm, milking cows, family, good neighbors, money in savings.*) What factors contributed to failure? (*Climate – late snow melt in spring, late and early frosts, drought, poor soils, forest fires, lack of family.*) Ask what they think were some of the hardest things about farming. Ask them what role fire played in farming the cutover. (*Used to clear land, some got out of control and burned large areas.*) Discuss how some fires became catastrophic when they got out of control due to high winds. Ask if anyone has heard of Peshtigo, Wisconsin.

Tell them that in 1871 fires that had been burning for weeks to clear land got out of control. High winds fueled the fire and burned the town, killing more than 1,000 people.

Tell your students that although many factors contributed to a farm's success or failure, the soils and climate had the greatest influence. In many areas, the soil was quite variable. One farm might have sandy soil that wouldn't grow crops, while a neighbor's land was good soil. Some regions of the cutover were all poor soils. Ask your students what they think happened to most of this poor land that was abandoned by farmers. (*No one paid the taxes, so the land became public land.*) Ask them if any one has ever been to the Nicolet or Chequamegon National Forest. Tell the students that both of these national forests, plus several state forests and many county forests, were established because the land wasn't fit to farm and the people gave it up. Tell them that in the next lesson, they will be learning how forests were re-established in Wisconsin.

CAREERS

The career profile in this lesson is about the Solin Family, Landowners/Business Owners. Career Profile 3D.LBO is found on page 62. A careers lesson that uses this information begins on page 140.

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Have students revisit the dream statement that they wrote during the first part of the lesson. Ask them to write a one-page reflection paper on whether or not their family lived out the dream they wrote for them. Have them include in the paper where they settled, the hardships they faced, and why the family succeeded or failed.



REFERENCES

Pictures reprinted with permission from the Portage County Historical Society and the UWSP Vallier Collection. The photos are historical but have been modified and names do not represent the actual people pictured.

Bawden, T. (1997). The Northwoods – Back to Nature. In R. Ostergren & T. Vale (Ed.). Wisconsin Land and Life. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Carstensen, V. (1958). Farms or Forests – Evolution of a State Land Policy for Northern Wisconsin, 1850-1932. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Madison College of Agriculture.

A Farm in Wisconsin Will Make Money for You from the Start: Crops Never Fail. (1896). Milwaukee, WI: Wisconsin Central Railroad.

Gough, R. (1997). Farming the Cutover – A Social History of Northern Wisconsin, 1900-1940. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.

Henry, W. A. (1896). Northern Wisconsin – A Hand-Book for the Homeseeker. Madison, WI: Democrat Printing Company.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

●●● WEBSITES ●●●

American Memory – Historical Collections for the National Digital Library
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ammemhome.html>

Use the search engine to find “*Northern Wisconsin: A Hand-Book for the Homeseeker*” and view the full text and photographs on-line.

Wisconsin Electronic Reader
www.library.wisc.edu/etext/WIReader/Contents.html

Use the timeline or search engine to find stories and pictures about the lumber era, Peshtigo fire, and more.

Wisconsin Historical Society – School Services
www.wisconsinhistory.org/oss/index.html

Find books and lesson plans about Wisconsin immigration history.

●●● BOOK/TEACHER GUIDE ●●●

Learning From the Land: Wisconsin Land Use Teachers Guide and Student Materials by Bobbie Malone, PhD, et. al. (Madison, WI: State Historical Society, 1998.) Student book and teacher's guide featuring background information and activities on farming, logging, settling Wisconsin, and geography.

●●● CD-ROM ●●●

The Wisconsin River Pinery – A Historical Interactive Essay, Marathon County Historical Society, 2003. This interactive CD-ROM features historical lumbering pictures and stories. Order at:
www.marathoncountyhistory.com/



The Solin family has a strong connection to forests in Wisconsin.

SOLIN FAMILY, LANDOWNERS/BUSINESS OWNERS

Meet Jeremy, Hattie, and Dave Solin. They represent three generations of a family who has owned land in northern Wisconsin since 1917. Dave and his brother Don own and work on the land now, which has had a long history.

Dave's grandparents came from Chicago in 1917 to farm on 40 acres they bought from people they knew. They started a dairy farm and sold vegetables from their garden to help earn money. In 1941, Hattie and her husband Joe took over the farm. Hattie says, "We worked hard growing good crops for the dairy herd, selling milk, and raising chickens, pigs, and geese to sell a few." They bought forest land and logged some trees every year (but not all of them) for added income.

By the time their sons (Dave and Don) took over, the family had about 400 acres. For a while, Dave worked for the City of Antigo and would work on evenings and weekends in the woods. Eventually he decided that he could make a living off the land and left his other job. Solin Brothers Forest Products, LLC now owns about 1,600 acres. In addition to logging, they do lots of other things on the land. They still have some farmland, raise white-tailed deer, sell Christmas trees, and raise and sell minnows and fish. Jeremy provides forestry education programs and materials for teachers around the state and goes home to help whenever he can.

Dave says, "If you enjoy being with nature, listening to the birds, and the rustle of the leaves in the wind, being a landowner might be for you. You also could consider a career in forestry or farming."

OUR FAMILY (A)

HEINRICH & ANNA KUHLMAN

Heinrich Kuhlman came to the U.S. as an immigrant from Germany in the fall of 1895. He was 23 years old at that time. Heinrich had \$62 when he decided to leave Germany. The boat ride cost him \$32 to get to Ellis Island in New York. He had a brother named Wilhelm, who had written letters to Heinrich to encourage him to come to Wisconsin. Wilhelm lived in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and worked in a sawmill. Heinrich traveled by train to Oshkosh. The trip cost him \$20. Heinrich found a job at the same sawmill where Wilhelm worked. He was paid \$26 a month and lived with his brother. He was able to save about \$15 each month.

While living with his brother, Heinrich met and fell in love with Anna Weichman. Anna was a German immigrant also. She was 17 at the time and still lived with her parents. Both Anna and Heinrich's fathers had worked on someone else's farms back in Germany. Heinrich and Anna had both helped work on the farm since they were kids. They both dreamed of having a farm of their own someday. In May of 1897, Anna and Heinrich got married. By then, Heinrich had saved \$300. They started looking for land to farm.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

May 2, 1895

Heinrich —

You won't believe the work here in Wisconsin. Why, there are near 40 different sawmills in Sawdust City. You should join us here in Oshkosh. You should be able to save enough money in two to three years to buy a farm. The logs we are sawing are coming from the north. They say there's lots of good land up there that will raise just about anything. Come join us.

—Wilhelm Kuhlman

OUR FAMILY (A)



Beth, Herman, Sarah, Anna, and Heinrich Kuhlman with oxen
in front of their cabin.

OUR FAMILY (B)

DUNCAN & LINDSEY MONTGOMERY

Duncan and Lindsey Montgomery arrived in America in 1910. They were just 18 years old and had been married just a few weeks before they left Canada. Duncan's great-grandfather had been a partner of the Northwest Company. A group of Scotsmen formed this company. The Northwest Company was a 1700s fur trade company that traveled and traded in Wisconsin. Duncan's great-grandfather had made a lot of money as a partner in the company. Duncan's mother had inherited a large sum of money from his estate. She gave Duncan and Lindsey \$1,500 to start a new life in America. The trip to America cost them \$72. They had read letters from Lindsey's cousin that talked about land for sale in Wisconsin.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

November 13, 1909

Dear Cousin Lindsey —

I read a story in a Milwaukee newspaper today that talks about land for sale in northern Wisconsin. I know that you and Duncan have thought about coming to America. I know that neither of you have grown up on a farm, but how hard can it be? There was a picture with the story that showed a family with six kids standing near their garden. The cabbages were as big as pumpkins. You should come to Wisconsin. Don't pass up this chance to be landowners.

— Adie

OUR FAMILY (B)



Duncan and Lindsey Montgomery with neighbor
in front of their home on the Pike River.

OUR FAMILY (C)

IRA & HELENA JANOWSKI

Ira and Helena Janowski live in Poland. It is 1905. Ira is 38 years old and Helena is 31. They have three children – Samuel, 13; Sophie, 10; and Carl, 5. Ira works in a woolen mill, where his father also works. The hours are long and the pay is not great. They have, however, been able to save just enough money (\$212) so they can join some of Helena's family in America. It will cost them about \$205 for the boat trip over and railroad tickets to Wisconsin. Two of Helena's brothers own farms near Stevens Point, Wisconsin. Helena grew up on a small farm. She and Ira dream of owning a farm in America soon. A recent letter from one of Helena's brother's wives has them excited.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

June 27, 1905

Helena —

This has been an early spring. The potatoes are growing well. Looks like the corn will be knee high by the fourth of July. Jon is old enough to help your brother with the milking. Hay crop looks good this year. Church picnic is this weekend. Can't wait for the celebration. You should talk Ira into leaving his job at the mill and coming to Wisconsin. There is land for sale just down the road from us. Samuel and Jon would sure have fun together. Family is important in this country. We would be here to help. Come to America.

— Bertha

OUR FAMILY (C)



Helena's brother Walter, Samuel, Helena's brother August, Carl, Ira, Helena, and Sophie Janowski in front of the family home.

OUR FAMILY (D)

PATRICK O'LEARY

Patrick O'Leary came to America as a young lad of 10. His family was from Ireland. He and his mother arrived in America in 1878. His family had been tenant farmers, renting a small plot of land from a landlord. Patrick's father sold everything they had to buy tickets on a ship to America. On the ride over, Patrick's father became ill and died during the voyage.

Patrick's mother found a job as a cook in a hotel. She was provided a place to live, some meals, and \$8 per month. Patrick helped her in the kitchen bringing wood for the stove and peeling potatoes. When Patrick was 15, he began work for a bricklayer. All day long he would carry bricks. He eventually became a bricklayer himself. Laying bricks was hard work. By age 25, Patrick had saved \$273. He often dreamed of his childhood back on the farm in Ireland. Patrick recently read an article in the newspaper about farming in Wisconsin.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

July 15, 1893

LAND OF PLENTY

Rhineland, Wisconsin - Not more than a few years ago, the land of northern Wisconsin was covered by tall pine forests. Now the northwoods has become an oasis for the homeseeker. Fertile bare land is plentiful. New farmers are striking it rich as this land produces like none other.

An agent of the Wisconsin Central Railroad says that "A farm in Wisconsin will make you money from the start. In this land, crops never fail. All you have to do is remove some stumps and your farm will provide you a fine living."

Some say you don't even have to be a farmer to farm. This land is so fertile that no one can go wrong. Banks are eager to lend the homeseeker money to buy this land. John Jingles, a local banker, says "No one should have a problem paying for their land in just a few years."

Although the land is plentiful, it is being bought up rapidly. Those interested in buying land in Wisconsin should do it now before all the land is sold.

OUR FAMILY (D)



Patrick O'Leary

OUR FAMILY (E)

SVEN, GRETA, OLE, AND SIGRID NELSON AND KIRSTEN JONSREND

Ole's family had a small farm in Norway. Ole's uncle worked as a lumberjack and had written letters about farmland for sale in Wisconsin. In 1880, Ole traveled to Wisconsin in search of land with his parents Sven and Greta and sister Sigrid. They had managed to save \$875. The trip to Wisconsin cost them \$205. Ole was 22 years old when he arrived in Wisconsin.

Kirsten Jonsrend was born in 1860 in America. Her family had come from Norway in 1840. Kirsten's father worked in the lumber camps in Maine. As the forests of Maine were all cut down, Kirsten's family moved to Wisconsin to follow the lumber camps. Kirsten was born in Wisconsin.

At this time, Ole and Kirsten have not yet met.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

August 3, 1880

Dear Sven —

When will you give up farming in Norway? That land of yours is just worn out. You are barely making ends meet. You should come join me in Wisconsin. There is plenty of land being cleared for the lumber. Why, in a few short years you could be farming several hundred acres. There will be work pulling out the stumps. You have got Ole to help. In no time at all, both of you can be farming. Come now while land is cheap.

—Carl

OUR FAMILY (E)



Sven, Greta, Sigrid, Kirsten, and Ole Nelson at the farm.

OUR FAMILY (F)

JOSEPH & MARTHA CRAIG

Joseph and Martha Craig were born in America. Joseph's great-grandfather fought in the Revolutionary War. He settled in Kentucky in 1787 after the war. Joseph was born on the homestead farm in Kentucky in 1852. He had five other brothers. A letter from his uncle Eli got Joseph interested in coming to Wisconsin. When Joseph was 19, he moved to Wisconsin to find work. Many native Kentuckians had moved to Wisconsin around that time to work in the lumber camps. Joseph lived with his uncle and started work as a swamper in a lumber camp. During his first winter of work, Joseph saved \$120.

Martha's great-grandparents had also settled in Kentucky. Martha's family had moved to Wisconsin from Kentucky to work in the lumber camps in 1858. Martha was 6 at the time. When Martha was 19, she worked in a lumber camp as a cookie. During her first winter of work, Martha saved \$90.

Joseph and Martha happen to work in the same camp. At this time they have fallen in love and are planning to get married in the summer.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

February 15, 1870

Joe —

It has been another cold week here in the northwoods. This week we cut the last of the pine near camp. We will have to travel about five miles to work starting next week. Work is hard, but steady. They feed us well.

You should leave Kentucky and join us here. Many are saving enough money to buy cutover land to farm. The land reminds me of back home. It's the place for those missing their old Kentucky home. Come soon!

— Eli

OUR FAMILY (F)



Joseph and Martha Craig's wedding.



Joseph and Martha Craig (holding guns) with neighbors, dogs, and horses.

.....

How much money does the family have at this time? _____

[illegible]

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION (B)

BUYING THE FARM

How much land did your family buy? _____

When did they buy the land? _____

How much did they pay for the land per acre? _____

Total amount paid? _____

Who did they buy the land from? _____

Did they borrow money to buy the land? _____

If yes, how much did they borrow? _____

How much money do they have left from savings after buying the farm? _____

In what county is their land located? _____

What is their address? _____

Are there things about their land that might make it difficult to farm? _____

FARM LIFE

What hardships did the family face while farming? _____

How well did crops grow on their land? _____

Did the family have to work outside the farm to pay the bills? _____

What parts of the farm made money for the family? _____

Do you think the family will make it as farmers? _____

BUYING THE FARM (A)

HEINRICH & ANNA KUHLMAN

OWN YOUR OWN FARM

LAND FOR SALE

TIMBER LAND COMPANY

- Prime farmland in Taylor County.
- Hardwood trees remain.
- Abundant water.
- Many sites to choose from.

You can own 160 acres
for as little as \$640!

**Join your neighbors
on the road to prosperity!**



This could be you!

BILL OF SALE

Date of Sale: June 3, 1897

Buyer: Heinrich & Anna Kuhlman

Seller: Timber Land Company

Property: 160 Acres Cutover Land in
Taylor County Near Goodrich, Wisconsin

Price: \$4.00 Per Acre

Total Price: \$640

Buyer Signature: *Heinrich Kuhlman*

Co-buyer Signature: *Anna Kuhlman*

● LAND DESCRIPTION ●

PROPERTY OWNER(S)

Heinrich & Anna Kuhlman

LOCATION

NW1/4 of Section 6, T31N-R3E

DESCRIPTION OF LAND

Rolling land with small stream. Pine trees have been logged. Some land wooded with hardwood trees. Soil with some rocks. Small swamp in corner of property. Main logging road connects to property. Located five miles northwest of Goodrich, Wisconsin.

MAIL ADDRESS

Goodrich, Wisconsin

LAND MORTGAGE LOAN

DATE: June 3, 1897

I, Heinrich & Anna Kuhlman promise to pay back the Security Land Bank the borrowed sum of \$450 over the period of 10 years for the purchase of 160 acres in Taylor County.

INTEREST RATE CHARGED: 7%

TOTAL INTEREST: \$173.25

MY TOTAL PAYMENT WILL BE: \$623.25

MY ANNUAL PAYMENT IS: \$62.32

BORROWER: *Heinrich Kuhlman*

CO-BORROWER: *Anna Kuhlman*

BUYING THE FARM (B)

DUNCAN & LINDSEY MONTGOMERY

OWN YOUR OWN FARM

LAND FOR SALE

IN WISCONSIN

NIAGARA LAND COMPANY

- Prime farmland in Marinette County.
- Hardwood trees remain.
- Abundant water.
- Many sites to choose from.

Land rates \$12-\$15
per acre.

**Join your neighbors
on the road to prosperity!**



This could be you!

BILL OF SALE

Date of Sale: February 3, 1910

Buyer: Duncan & Lindsey Montgomery

Seller: Niagara Land Company

Property: 160 Acres Cutover Land in
Marinette County Near Dunbar, Wisconsin

Price: \$15.00 Per Acre

Total Price: \$2,400

Buyer Signature: *Duncan Montgomery*

Co-buyer Signature: *Lindsey Montgomery*

● LAND DESCRIPTION ●

PROPERTY OWNER(S)

Duncan & Lindsey Montgomery

LOCATION

NW1/4 of Section 32, T36N-R19E

DESCRIPTION OF LAND

Pike River is boundary on the east of the property. Land is rolling, with some stumps. Pine trees have been logged. Some hardwoods remain. Property approximately eight miles south of Dunbar, Wisconsin.

MAIL ADDRESS

Dunbar, Wisconsin

LAND MORTGAGE LOAN

DATE: February 3, 1910

I, Duncan & Lindsey Montgomery promise to pay back the Security Land Bank the borrowed sum of \$1,200 over the period of 10 years for the purchase of 160 acres in Marinette County.

INTEREST RATE CHARGED: 7%

TOTAL INTEREST: \$508.50

MY TOTAL PAYMENT WILL BE: \$1,708.50

MY ANNUAL PAYMENT IS: \$170.85

BORROWER: *Duncan Montgomery*

CO-BORROWER: *Lindsey Montgomery*

BUYING THE FARM (C)

IRA & HELEN JANOWSKI

OWN YOUR OWN FARM

LAND FOR SALE

Portage County, Wisconsin

HOME LAND & TIMBER COMPANY

- ☛ Rich land waiting for your crops.
- ☛ Join your fellow Polish immigrants.
- ☛ Abundant water.
- ☛ Many sites to choose from.

You can own 40 acres
for as little as \$400!

Where you can build a home!



This could be you!

BILL OF SALE

Date of Sale: March 3, 1906

Buyer: Ira & Helena Janowski

Seller: Home Land & Timber Company

Property: 80 Acres Cutover Land in
Portage County Near Polonia, Wisconsin

Price: \$10.00 Per Acre

Total Price: \$800

Buyer Signature: Ira Janowski

Co-buyer Signature: Helena Janowski

● LAND DESCRIPTION ●

PROPERTY OWNER(S)

Ira & Helena Janowski

LOCATION

E1/2, NW1/4, Section 13, T24N-R9E

DESCRIPTION OF LAND

Rolling land with rocks. Pine trees have been logged. Most hardwoods removed. Probably 15 acres is swamp. Tomorrow River runs through the property. Located three miles southeast of Polonia, Wisconsin.

MAIL ADDRESS

Polonia, Wisconsin

LAND MORTGAGE LOAN

DATE: March 3, 1906

I, Ira & Helena Janowski promise to pay back the Security Land Bank the borrowed sum of \$800 over the period of 10 years for the purchase of 80 acres in Portage County.

INTEREST RATE CHARGED: 7%

TOTAL INTEREST: \$339.00

MY TOTAL PAYMENT WILL BE: \$1,139.00

MY ANNUAL PAYMENT IS: \$113.90

BORROWER: Ira Janowski

CO-BORROWER: Helena Janowski

BUYING THE FARM (D)

PATRICK O'LEARY

OWN YOUR OWN FARM

LAND FOR SALE

Vilas County, Wisconsin

PINE LAND & LUMBER COMPANY

- Abundant, fertile lands available.
- Hardwood trees remain.
- Abundant water.
- Own your own lake.

You can own 40 acres
for as little as \$200!



This could be you!

BILL OF SALE

Date of Sale: October 12, 1893

Buyer: Patrick O'Leary

Seller: Pine Land & Lumber Company

Property: 80 Acres Cutover Land in Vilas County Near Conover, Wisconsin

Price: \$5.00 Per Acre

Total Price: \$400

Buyer Signature: *Patrick O'Leary*

Co-buyer Signature:

● LAND DESCRIPTION ●

PROPERTY OWNER(S)

Patrick O'Leary

LOCATION

N1/2, NW1/4, Section 9, T40N-R10E

DESCRIPTION OF LAND

Rolling land with some rocks. Soil sandy. Small 15 acre lake on property. Some swamp surrounding lake. Located seven miles south of Conover, Wisconsin.

MAIL ADDRESS

Conover, Wisconsin

LAND MORTGAGE LOAN

DATE: October 12, 1893

I, Patrick O'Leary promise to pay back the Security Land Bank the borrowed sum of \$250 over the period of 10 years for the purchase of 80 acres in Vilas County.

INTEREST RATE CHARGED: 7%

TOTAL INTEREST: \$105.90

MY TOTAL PAYMENT WILL BE: \$355.90

MY ANNUAL PAYMENT IS: \$35.59

BORROWER: *Patrick O'Leary*

CO-BORROWER:

BUYING THE FARM (E)

THE NELSON'S

OWN YOUR OWN FARM

LAND FOR SALE

Barron County, Wisconsin

BARRON TIMBER COMPANY

- ☛ Prime land for farming.
- ☛ Hardwood trees remain.
- ☛ Abundant water.
- ☛ Some land cleared.

You can own 160 acres
for as little as \$400!

Enjoy the riches of the land!



This could be you!

BILL OF SALE

Date of Sale: February 3, 1881

Buyer: Sven & Greta Nelson

Seller: Barron Timber Company

Property: 240 Acres Cutover Land in
Barron County Near Haugan, Wisconsin

Price: \$2.50 Per Acre

Total Price: \$600

Buyer Signature: Sven Nelson

Co-buyer Signature: Greta Nelson

● LAND DESCRIPTION ●

PROPERTY OWNER(S)

Sven & Greta Nelson

LOCATION

SW1/4 of Section 21 and W1/2, SE1/4 Section
21, T36N-R12W

DESCRIPTION OF LAND

Rolling land with rocks. Pine trees have been
logged. Small stream runs through property.
Small swamp adjoins stream. Most hardwoods
left. Located six miles west of Haugan.

MAIL ADDRESS

Haugan, Wisconsin

LAND MORTGAGE LOAN

DATE: February 3, 1881

I, Sven & Greta Nelson promise to pay back
the Security Land Bank the borrowed sum of
\$100 over the period of 10 years for the
purchase of 240 acres in Barron County.

INTEREST RATE CHARGED: 7%

TOTAL INTEREST: \$42.40

MY TOTAL PAYMENT WILL BE: \$142.40

MY ANNUAL PAYMENT IS: \$14.24

BORROWER: Sven Nelson

CO-BORROWER: Greta Nelson

BUYING THE FARM (F)

JOSEPH & MARTHA CRAIG

OWN YOUR OWN FARM

LAND FOR SALE

HOLCOMB LAND COMPANY

- Cutover land available in Forest County.
- Hardwood trees remain.
- Abundant water.

You can own 160 acres
for as little as \$240!

Land of your own!



This could be you!

BILL OF SALE

Date of Sale: July 3, 1871

Buyer: Joseph & Martha Craig

Seller: Holcomb Land Company

Property: 120 Acres Cutover Land in Forest County Near Alvin, Wisconsin

Price: \$1.50 Per Acre

Total Price: \$180

Buyer Signature: *Joseph Craig*

Co-buyer Signature: *Martha Craig*

● LAND DESCRIPTION ●

PROPERTY OWNER(S)

Joseph & Martha Craig

LOCATION

S1/2, S1/2 Section 24, T41N-R14E

DESCRIPTION OF LAND

Rolling land with lowland areas. Brule River is north boundary. At least 1/4 of property is swamp. Pine trees have been logged. Popple and hardwoods remain. Located seven miles east of Nelma, Wisconsin

MAIL ADDRESS

Alvin, Wisconsin

LAND MORTGAGE LOAN

DATE: July 3, 1871

I, Joseph & Martha Craig promise to pay back the Security Land Bank the borrowed sum of \$50 over the period of 10 years for the purchase of 120 acres in Forest County.

INTEREST RATE CHARGED: 7%

TOTAL INTEREST: \$21.20

MY TOTAL PAYMENT WILL BE: \$71.20

MY ANNUAL PAYMENT IS: \$7.12

BORROWER: *Joseph Craig*

CO-BORROWER: *Martha Craig*

FARM LIFE (A)

HEINRICH & ANNA KUHLMAN

LETTERS FROM THE CUTOVER

June 20, 1897

Wilhelm ~

We are finally on our own land. It is both beautiful and ugly here. Areas that were untouched by logging are dark and scary. We can't wait to remove more of the forest. Most of the land is covered with stumps from the pine trees that were logged off the property 10 years ago. Heinrich says it is good land. He is ready to get started on the land, but we don't have enough money to buy the horses and equipment needed to farm. He will work in the lumber camps this winter to earn the money needed to get started.

We have pitched a tent on some high ground. We have selected this spot that looks over a valley for our home. Heinrich purchased some tools to cut some trees to build a small cabin. Our goal for this first summer is food and shelter. We will build a simple log cabin for now. Our time will be split between building the cabin and growing a garden. We hope we can grow enough to feed ourselves the first winter.

Your sister-in-law,

Anna

May 5, 1898

Wilhelm ~

Heinrich has been gone all winter. He returned last week from a lumber camp near Merrill. The cabin we built kept me dry and warm. Although I got tired of potatoes, my garden did feed me. Heinrich was able to save enough to buy a horse and harness. Our first payment on the farm is due next month. Looks like we will have enough left to pay it.

The air here is full of smoke. Our neighbors are burning the treetops left behind after logging. I pray that we don't get high winds. About 25 years ago, high winds caused farmer's fires to spread and burn the town of Peshtigo. More than 1,000 people died.

It is still too early to plant the garden, so we have been working long days to remove stumps and rocks from a field near the cabin. Most days we only get one to three stumps pulled. It is a slow process, but we hope to have several acres cleared by late May. A neighbor has a plow and is willing to let us use it when he is done. Another neighbor has oats and corn left that he will loan us to plant for our first crop. Can't wait to see this fall's crop.

Good news, I am with child. We guess it will be born this summer.

Your sister-in-law,

Anna

FARM LIFE (A)

HEINRICH & ANNA KUHLMAN

LETTERS FROM THE CUTOVER, CONTINUED

February 14, 1900

Wilhelm ~

Sorry it has been so long since I last wrote. We have been busy carving a farm out of rocks and stumps. It's Valentine's Day and here I sit home alone with Beth. The winters seem long and lonely. Heinrich is back in the logging camp. He has been there since late November. Crops were good this year. We sold the corn we had and were able to buy a milk cow. I now have chores to do morning and night. The store in town buys the milk, so we now have a steady income. It is busy with a small child.

We have now cleared about 15 acres with the help of dynamite and a newfangled machine that lifts the stump out of the ground. We have continued to pay our taxes, loan payment, and have money left to buy seed and livestock. We borrowed money to build a barn last year. About 20 neighbors came to help. We built the barn in about 3 days. All the women came and helped me cook for their men.

Your sister-in-law,

Anna

November 29, 1902

Wilhelm ~

Heinrich is back at the logging camp. The camp has moved further from us this year. Good thing he has work. We had a late frost last spring and most of the corn and garden died. We replanted the corn, but it didn't do well. My garden didn't grow well either.

Beth keeps me busy; she is getting big. Soon she will be in school. I am expecting another baby in the spring.

We now have 40 acres cleared. We have planted the remainder of the stump fields to hay and grass. We make hay where we can and let the cows feed on the rest. Our cow herd has grown to 15. That is all I can do on my own during the winter. If we get any bigger, Heinrich will have to stay home next winter.

Your sister-in-law,

Anna

March 15, 1905

Wilhelm ~

Today we celebrated. We have done well during the past few years. Heinrich no longer has to work in the woods during the winter. Yesterday, we were able to pay off our loan on the land. We now own it free and clear. Things are going well. Beth enjoys school and does well. Herman keeps me busy at home. We are expecting our third child.

Heinrich and I now milk 20 cows. It takes most of the morning and evening, but it is paying the bills. Several of our neighbors have tried to raise just crops. Without the cows, they are not making it. They are having problems paying their taxes. I am glad we invested in the cows.

Your sister-in-law,

Anna

FARM LIFE (B)

DUNCAN & LINDSEY MONTGOMERY

LETTERS FROM THE CUTOVER

April 3, 1910

Dear Adie ~

Duncan and I finally got into our land today. The snow has been too deep to get to the property. For the last 2 months, we have lived in a boarding house in Goodman. During that time, we secured a loan to buy a team of horses, harness, a wagon, and tools to clear the land.

We have located a spot for our home and building site near the Pike River. There are maple trees in this area, so we will have both shade and water. We are currently living in a tent, but hope to start building a small cabin at once. When the frost goes out of the ground later this month, we will start the job of removing the stumps left by the logging. I will write more when I have time.

Your friend,

Lindsey

May 15, 1911

Dear Adie ~

Well, we survived the winter. Duncan finished the roof over our head in November. It is a small cabin, only 10 feet by 10 feet. The garden was a little short on feeding us, so we had to buy some food. Duncan says this year will be different.

We still have snow today. Don't know how soon we will be able to plant. We did get 5 acres cleared and plowed by last fall. Money is now short, but we are looking forward to the bounty of our crops.

Your friend,

Lindsey

August 15, 1910

Dear Adie ~

The pictures we saw of farms in Wisconsin looked so wonderful. Seems the property that we bought is blessed with many rocks and stumps that take dynamite to remove. We have worked for the last 4 months and have only 3 acres cleared. The cabin is still just a foundation. We haven't found time to work on it and try to grow a crop. Duncan is determined to get five acres ready to plant. The problem is it is too late to plant this year. I have a smaller garden, but am concerned if it will feed us all winter. Duncan says not to worry. I hope he is right.

Your friend,

Lindsey

FARM LIFE (B)

DUNCAN & LINDSEY MONTGOMERY

LETTERS FROM THE CUTOVER, CONTINUED

July 4, 1912

Dear Adie ~

Sorry it has been so long since my last letter. Last year's crops were not great. We have been able to pay our loan payment and taxes, but not a lot of dollars left. Duncan may have to look for work this winter.

We continue to try and remove rocks and stumps. Land in our area seems to be changing hands daily. We have seen several neighbors give up farming and look elsewhere for a living. Spring came late again. Our first planting of corn was killed by a late frost. The soil is sandy and last summer things dried out. Duncan says our luck is about to change. I pray that he is right.

Your friend,

Lindsey

November 25, 1914

Dear Adie ~

A lot has happened since I last wrote you. We have continued to struggle with this farm. The climate just doesn't seem right for growing crops. We have stopped clearing any further land. This year's crop is still in the field. Duncan has taken a job at the sawmill in town and hasn't had much time to farm. I have been trying to harvest the crop myself, but it is slow going. A forest fire burned through the area, but missed our property. It started from fires farmers had set to burn the tree tops left from logging. Several neighbors were burned out. Probably will be the end for them.

The war with Germany will no doubt affect life here in Wisconsin. Many of the men working with Duncan are saying they will fight. I pray that Duncan remains home with me. We are behind on our payments to the bank. Without Duncan's help, we will for sure lose our land. Duncan says not to worry, but I know that down deep he wants to fight.

Your friend,

Lindsey

FARM LIFE (C)

IRA & HELENA JANOWSKI

LETTERS FROM THE CUTOVER

March 3, 1906

My Dearest Mother ~

We survived the long trip from Poland. We are now in Wisconsin with Helena's brother's family. The land here is rolling. Just five miles west of here, the land is perfectly flat. Most of the farmers here are milking cows. The sale of milk is helping them all pay their bills.

Today we jumped in to farming with both boots on. We bought 80 acres down the road a mile from Helena's brother's place. We have a great deal of work to do to remove the stumps and rocks on the site. Once we have completed this work, we will be ready to farm.

We plan to live with Helena's family this first year, while I earn money working in town. Stevens Point is about 10 miles away from our land. There are a number of sawmills in town, so it should not be hard to find a job.

Your son,

Ira

December 25, 1906

My Dearest Mother ~

Merry Christmas. We are all alive and well. It has been a very busy 9 months since I last wrote to you. I was lucky enough to land a job at a local sawmill, so we are saving the money needed to make our payments on the land. Helena and the children have worked most of the summer removing rocks from the fields. Helena's brothers have let us use a team of horses and a wagon. Some of the rocks are 2 to 3 feet across. I work every night and weekends moving the big rocks and pulling out stumps.

Helena grew a magnificent garden this summer. We plan to continue to live with her brother's family until next summer. They are kind enough to let us live with them as we get the money to start on our own. Samuel helps with milking the cows and Helena's garden adds to our food.

We plan to build a house next spring. I can buy the lumber from the mill I work at fairly cheap. I figure I will have to work full-time at the sawmill for about 3 years. After that I should be able to be a year-round farmer. Next spring I will begin planting some of the land. I should be able to farm and work too.

Your son,

Ira

FARM LIFE (C)

IRA & HELENA JANOWSKI

LETTERS FROM THE CUTOVER, CONTINUED

September 15, 1907

My Dearest Mother-in-law ~

Two weeks ago, all the neighbors came to help us build our house. In two days, the house was standing. Ira has a friend that is a carpenter. He is helping us put in the windows and doors. We had to borrow some money to buy the windows and have it plastered. If all goes well, we should be in our new house in another month.

Ira continues to work at the sawmill and on the farm at night. We have 10 acres cleared and have it planted to corn, potatoes, and wheat. We harvested the wheat last month. We have much to sell. We hope the corn and potatoes do as well. My brother sold us 2 older milk cows, so Samuel now has chores at home. The sale of the milk provides us enough cash for most of our needs. Ira looks forward to farming full-time in the next year.

Ira was called to a neighbor's yesterday to help fight a fire. The neighbor had been burning some treetops left from logging and the wind came up. The fire spread and burned one cornfield. Luckily it didn't get to their building site. Many a settler has been burned out by someone else's fire. Glad it didn't get our crop.

Your daughter-in-law,

Helena

December 25, 1909

My Dearest Mother ~

Merry Christmas. I hope this letter finds you in good health.

We have all been blessed with health this past year. Things have gone well for our family. We now have 30 acres cleared and crops growing. On some of our land, we have sowed hay to feed the cows. We now have 6 cows. We have saved enough to pay the farm off later this month. I plan to farm full-time this summer. Next winter I probably will work in the woods as a lumberjack. It is hard work, but pays well.

Your son,

Ira

December 25, 1912

My Dearest Mother-in-law ~

Merry Christmas. Hope the year finds you well. Samuel and Ira are gone to the Northwoods. For the last 2 winters, they both have worked in a lumber camp near Big Falls. Although they are gone on this holiday, we have much to be thankful for. We bought an additional 80 acres so Samuel could farm too. He still lives with us, but I imagine sometime soon he will move out on his own. He has been sweet on a girl who lives down the road. Wouldn't surprise me if she isn't kin by this time next year. Sophie and Carl help me milk the 16 cows we own. If all goes well, we should be able to pay the loan off on the new 80 in 3 to 5 years.

Your daughter-in-law,

Helena

FARM LIFE (D)

PATRICK O'LEARY

LETTERS FROM THE CUTOVER

October 12, 1893

Dear Mom ~

I am writing to you from northern Wisconsin. I just finished signing a loan at the bank. Today I became a farmer. I bought 80 of the most beautiful acres one could set eyes on. I even own my own lake. I had to borrow some money, but shouldn't have a problem paying it back. The man I bought the land from says if you aren't afraid to work, you will make it big. I plan to start tomorrow at building a cabin. I hope to have a roof over my head by Christmas.

Your son,

Patrick

December 25, 1893

Dear Mom ~

I have found that you can't build a cabin by yourself in just 2 months. I have about half of the walls up. Winter came early. The snow is deeper than the walls on my cabin. I have found work as a hay man on the hill at a local lumber camp. My job is to spread hay on the downhill parts of the logging road. The hay helps slow down the sleighs loaded with logs. I can't complain. I get 3 meals a day, a place to sleep, and \$18 a month. Hope all is well in New York. Merry Christmas.

Your son,

Patrick

November 26, 1894

Dear Mom ~

Hard to believe, but it has taken most of the summer to finish my cabin. Snow didn't leave us until almost the first of June. I got a garden planted, but haven't cleared much of the land. Much of my land still has maple trees growing on it. I have to cut down trees, remove the stumps, and remove the rocks. This summer I got about 3 acres cleared. Hope to plant my first fields next spring. I am going to plant corn.

I am back at the lumber camp. It is hard work, but I enjoy the company of the other jacks. Many of them also are farmers. Seems like we make our living in the lumber camp and then spend it on the farm. Hope life is better in New York City. Happy Thanksgiving.

Your son,

Patrick

FARM LIFE (D)

PATRICK O'LEARY

LETTERS FROM THE CUTOVER, CONTINUED

March 17, 1896

Dear Mom ~

Happy St. Patrick's Day. Won't be long and spring break-up will be here. That's the time when the rivers open and we send the logs down river to the mill. I think I might work the river run this year. I could use the money.

Last year's crop was a bust. A late frost in June was hard on my corn. Then July and August were hot and dry. If that wasn't bad enough, a fire took my corn. A fire a neighbor started to clear some land got out of control. In the end, the corn patch burned. All 8 acres burned. All that work went up in smoke in a matter of minutes. That fire burned almost 3 miles before it rained and put it out. At least it didn't burn down the town. Twenty-five years ago, a fire like this got fueled by high winds and burned the town of Peshtigo. In the end, more than 1,000 people died.

I am behind on my payments to the bank. I will need a good crop the next few years or I just might as well go back to laying bricks.

Your son,

Patrick

December 25, 1898

Dear Mom ~

It's Christmas, but not very merry. Over the past several years I have continued to clear some more land, but don't know why. The climate just doesn't seem fit for farming. By the time that the soil is fit to plant it is mid-June. By the time I get my planting done, it's July. There just aren't enough days left before the first fall frost for a crop to grow. The last 2 years I haven't raised enough to pay for the seed. I am still behind on my payment to the bank. This farming is like burning money for heat. It goes fast and hardly makes a flame.

I hope you are doing well. If things don't improve, I might move back to the city and lay bricks.

Your son,

Patrick

FARM LIFE (E)

THE NELSON'S

LETTERS FROM THE CUTOVER

February 3, 1881

Dear Carl ~

You were right. There is good land in Wisconsin. Today we became Wisconsin farmers. We bought 240 acres west of Haugan. Ole will be joining you next week to work in the woods. Thanks for lining up a job for him. Greta, Sigrid, and I are staying with friends in Rice Lake until spring. We plan to live in a wall tent until we get a house built later this summer. I have found work at the mill and Greta is cooking at a boarding house. Can't wait to start farming.

Your brother,

Sven

April 12, 1881

Dear Mom and Dad ~

Hello from the big woods. Lumberjack life suits me. I am working as a buckner with Nels Hanson. We are getting pretty good at cutting the logs. Speaking of pretty, there is a girl here helping cook that has struck my fancy. Her name is Kirsten Jonsrend. I have been trying to court her, but I am not the only single man here. She comes to dances on Saturday evening with her father. I've been lucky enough to dance a jig or 2 with her. Well, won't be long until this year's logging is done. I should be home in a month. Can't wait to start farming with you.

Your son,

Ole

November 25, 1881

Dear Carl ~

Our first year of farming is going well. I don't know if I told you, but the lumber company had already cleared 40 acres of the land we bought. Before they moved the logging camp, they were farming 40 acres to provide hay for the horses and food for the jacks. We were able to buy a team of horses and equipment to plant 25 acres to corn. The other 15 acres is in hay.

Once we got the corn planted, we worked hard on clearing another 10 acres for next year. The crop we got this year was pretty good. We have grain to sell and plan to buy milk cows next year. We got a shell of a house built and will finish the inside next year. Ole will be joining you in a week in the woods. He has been writing a gal named Kirsten who cooks at your camp. Who knows ~ maybe wedding bells coming.

Your brother,

Sven

FARM LIFE (E)

THE NELSON'S

LETTERS FROM THE CUTOVER, CONTINUED

December 25, 1882

Dear Mom and Dad ~

Merry Christmas. I wanted to let you know that I asked Kirsten to marry me today. She said "YES!" We plan to be married this June, soon as the corn is planted. I think with my wages we should be able to buy more cows. Perhaps next winter we will stay home with you all. Now that we have 70 acres cleared and a new barn, I think it is time to settle down. See you in the spring.

Your son,

Ole

November 20, 1884

Dear Carl ~

Thanksgiving is coming next week. We have much to be thankful for. We now have 100 acres cleared. The rest of the land we have sown to grass. Glad that work is done. Those stumps were a huge amount of work to remove. Some of them we could pull out without digging out the roots. Several we had to use dynamite on. We've had a fire burning for weeks to help clear the land. Thank heavens the winds have been light. Last spring a fire burnt out 12 settlers in one area when a fire got out of hand.

We now have 25 cows to milk, and money from the milk is paying the bills. We have paid off our loan at the bank, so now own the place free and clear.

Ole and Kirsten are doing well. They are expecting their first child soon. They won't be joining you this year in the lumber camp. We've got enough milking to keep us busy. Hope life is good for you too.

Your brother,

Sven

December 25, 1886

Dear Uncle Carl ~

Merry Christmas. Our family is doing well, though this year's crop was not good. A late spring melt, followed by an early frost, was hard on the corn. Good thing we have the cows. Milk money will pay the bills. We were lucky buying land that had been already cleared. Many of our neighbors are struggling. Having a crop our first year really helped. Kirsten and the kids send their love. Tell everyone in camp a Merry Christmas from us.

Your nephew,

Ole

FARM LIFE (F)

JOSEPH & MARTHA CRAIG

LETTERS FROM THE CUTOVER

July 4, 1871

Dear Mom ~

Hope you got home safely from the wedding. I thought marriage was a big step. Guess what? Martha and I just bought 120 acres of land. The land is located on the Michigan border. The Brule River runs along the north edge of the farm. Much of the land is still covered with popple and maple trees. Probably will take a few years to get land cleared for crops. The big pines were logged just last year, so stumps are a plenty. The work ought to keep us both busy. Hope to get a cabin built this summer. We plan to go back to the lumber camp this winter.

Your son,

Joseph

October 10, 1871

Dear Mom ~

By now you probably heard of the great fire that burned out of control in northern Wisconsin. They are guessing that more than 1,000 people perished in a fire in Peshtigo 2 days ago. They say it was like a fire cyclone. The forest is burned out for miles. We were lucky, that fire was not close to us.

Long summer days have allowed us to finish our cabin. It is built out of logs and is about 16 feet square. One weekend, all the Kentucks came and helped us. We put the walls up that weekend. Great to have friends from back home to help. We have started pulling a few stumps, but they don't come out easy. I'd guess we got maybe 5 acres cleared. Martha's garden grew well this summer. We have squash and cabbage for the whole neighborhood.

Your son,

Joseph

FARM LIFE (F)

JOSEPH & MARTHA CRAIG

LETTERS FROM THE CUTOVER, CONTINUED

July 4, 1873

Dear Mom ~

Happy Independence Day! Great-gramps would be proud today. We are celebrating with kin here in Alvin. Sorry to report that farming isn't going so well. We have struggled to clear 15 acres. But if that ain't enough, crops don't seem to do all that well after you farm the ground a couple of years. Several of the neighbors got great crops the first few years, but now that ground won't raise anything. Climate seems to be against us too. The last 2 years, it has been mid-May before the snow melts. Killing frosts as late as June 15 and early as September 1 are common. It's hard to get much to grow in such a short time.

We are trying wheat this year. Some seem to get it to grow. Garden looks good, though. Without much of a crop, guess we'll be back in the lumber camps come November.

Your son,

Joseph

December 25, 1875

Dear Mom ~

Merry Christmas! Hope everyone is well in Kentucky. We are back in the lumber camp again. Seems like we work all winter, so we can pay for the chance to farm. We now have 25 acres cleared. I think this might be the last we clear. Soil is pretty sandy. This past summer was dry. Sandy soil and no rain mean no crops. Martha carried water to her garden, so we have something in the cupboard. Several of our neighbors have let their farms go. If you don't pay your taxes, the county ends up with the land. Not many folks wanting to buy more land here. On the bright side, we are healthy and Martha is with child. We should have a little one in a few months. That's my Christmas present to you, Grandma.

Your son,

Joseph

December 25, 1877

Dear Mom ~

Christmas finds me in the lumber camp again. Now that we have Everett, Martha has stayed home the last 2 winters. Lumber camp is no place for a young'un. It has been a little over a month since I left them. I sure do miss them and wonder if there is a better way to live. The farm continues to lose money. Hard to believe that we have nothing to show for the hard work we have done on that farm. If it weren't for good neighbors, we most likely wouldn't be farming. Several people have hung it up recently. They couldn't pay their taxes, so the county owns it now. This is a hard life we have chosen. The land companies sure make farming sound easy. Happy holiday.

Your son,

Joseph

FINAL VERDICTS

Final VerdictHeinrich & Anna Kuhlman

Twenty years later, Heinrich and Anna are still farming. Their son Herman now is farming with them. They are milking 35 cows and have bought another 80 acres of land. They are proud to be successful farmers.

Final VerdictDuncan & Lindsey Montgomery

Duncan enlisted to fight the Germans in World War I. He was killed in France. Lindsey tried to sell the farm, but no one was interested. She abandoned it and moved to Milwaukee to live with her cousin Adie. Eventually she remarried a man who works in a factory. Their farm eventually became part of the Marinette County Forest.

Final VerdictIra & Helena Janowski

Ira and Helena continued to farm with their son and his family. Samuel fought in World War I, and came home to farm with his parents. They eventually owned 320 acres and milked 40 cows.

Final VerdictPatrick O'Leary

Patrick had enough with trying to farm. He tried to sell his land, but there was little interest. No one had been able to make it in the Conover area. He just abandoned his farm and moved to Chicago, where he again laid bricks. He was involved in building many of the tall buildings in Chicago. His farm was planted back to trees by the county. It was eventually sold, and today there are 15 houses around the lake.

Final VerdictOle & Kirsten Nelson

Ole and Kirsten continued to farm with his parents. His uncle Carl eventually bought land near them. The Nelson's continued milking cows and eventually got a contract with a neighboring logging company to grow hay for their camps. They just bought 80 more acres.

Final VerdictJoseph & Martha Craig

Joseph and Martha decided they would get ahead faster if they let the farm go. They bought a house in Tippler and Joseph continued to work in the woods. The farm ended up as part of the Nicolet National Forest and was replanted in 1930.