Chapter 6: They Came to Wisconsin and They're Still Coming: Immigration and Settlement

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1825 | **1850** | **1875** | **1900**

▲ **1842** Richard Thomas leaves Cornwall and arrives in Mineral Point

▲ **1857** Koepsell family leaves Pomerania and arrives in Washington County

▲ **1863** Greene family escapes slavery in Missouri

▲ **1864** Greene family settles in Pleasant Ridge, Grant County

▲ **1893** Ketola family leaves Finland and arrives in Oulu, Bayfield County

Pomeranian basket, 1850s

Key Words

- emancipated
- emigrate
- Holocaust
- immigrant
- immigration
- integrated
- migrant
- migration
- refugees
- slave
- slavery

Thinking Like a Historian

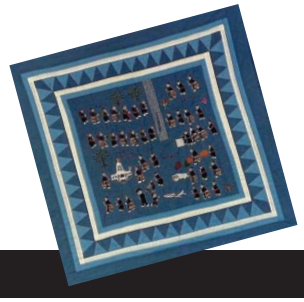
In what ways did events that were happening where people were living push them to leave or move away? In what ways did opportunities in Wisconsin pull newcomers to the state?

How did newcomers keep traditions they brought with them? How did newcomers adapt to their new homes and environments?

What were the turning points in the lives of the people you read about in this chapter?

How are the experiences of those who moved to Wisconsin long ago similar to those of people who moved here more recently? How are they different?

How did the strengths that people brought with them help them adapt to and survive in Wisconsin?



Typical Hmong storycloth

1925 | 1950 | 1975 | 2000

1945 Rosa Goldberg is rescued from Germany

1953 Katz family settles in Oshkosh

1957 Cris Plata lives in Wisconsin for the first time

1980 Cris and Ann Plata return to Columbia County permanently

1980 Mai Ya Xiong is born in Thailand

2004 Mai Ya Xiong graduates from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee

Immigration and Migration: Then and Now

In this chapter, you'll find out more about people who were not born in Wisconsin but chose to make their homes here. You'll learn why they left their homeland, how they traveled here, and what their lives were like after they arrived. Some people came in the early 1800s. Others came more than 100 years later. How does your family's experience fit into this pattern of stories?

Who is an immigrant?

Have you lived in Wisconsin all of your life? Or did you move from elsewhere? If you came from another country, then you are an **immigrant.** If you moved here from a different state in the United States, then you are a **migrant.** Moving from one country to settle and live in another country is called **immigration.** Moving from one region to another in the United States is called **migration.**

Maybe you have lived in Wisconsin all of your life, but your parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents moved here from another country. *They* are the immigrants in your family. When you read Chapter 3, you learned that the ancestors of the Ho-Chunk and Menominee Nations have lived in Wisconsin for thousands of years. Other people—or their parents or **ancestors** who arrived here in the last 400 years—either immigrated or migrated here.

What is immigration?

Why do people leave their **homeland** and settle in another country? Not every immigrant or migrant chooses to leave home. Sometimes events *push* or force people from their homes in one country or some region of this country. Sometimes people cannot find work to help their families survive. They must move to find good jobs. Sometimes a war makes it impossible for people to continue to live in their home country. They must leave for their own safety. Sometimes, a terrible storm like Hurricane Katrina in 2005 pushes thousands of people from their homes. After the storm, many people lost everything and had to start over elsewhere. People who leave to escape harm are **refugees** as well as immigrants.

Some people choose to leave to be closer to family or friends who have already moved. Others leave to take better-paying jobs or to buy land that they couldn't buy in their homeland. Opportunities for a better life tend to *pull* people from their home country. In this chapter, you'll read about immigrants, migrants, and refugees who settled in Wisconsin.

homeland A country where someone was born or has lived **immigrant** (**im** uh gruhnt) A person from one country who moves to settle permanently in another country
migrant (**mI** gruhnt) A person who moves from one state or region of a country to another **immigration** (im uh **gray** shuhn) Moving from one country to settle and live in another country **migration** (my **gray** shuhn) The process of moving from one region to another within the same country
ancestors (**an** ses turz) Members of your family who lived a long time ago, usually before your grandparents
refugees (ref yoo **jeez**) People forced to leave home to escape harm after disaster or war

What is it like to be an immigrant?

You'll discover in this chapter the real stories of seven people who came to Wisconsin. Some came alone. Others came with their families. They each came from different parts of the world. They came at different times in history. And they settled in different parts of the state. Some were *pushed* from their homes. Others were *pulled* to Wisconsin.

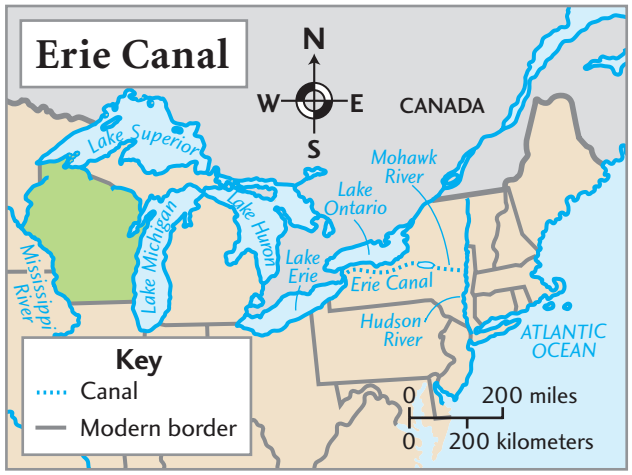
However, they all left familiar places. They all traveled through new, unknown places. They all made new lives in a new land. For some newcomers, this meant learning English. For others, it meant learning new skills. Some felt sad because they had to leave family members behind. Others felt happy because they had escaped from very difficult and dangerous situations. If you are an immigrant, you may recognize some of these experiences. If your ancestors were the immigrants in your family, this chapter may help you understand more about *their* immigration experiences.

Immigration, migration, and settlement in Wisconsin have been going on for thousands of years. Remember reading in Chapter 3 about when the different Indian groups began arriving here to live? Many different groups of people have been arriving here ever since. More people will probably continue to arrive in the future. Immigration and settlement are a big part of Wisconsin's past, present, and future.

These children are celebrating **Ethnic** Pride Day at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. Laotian, African, Hmong, Indian, Hispanic, and American Indian cultures are all celebrated here. Have you ever been to a celebration like this? Are there special things you do with your family to celebrate your **heritage**?

Ethnic Having to do with a group of people sharing the same home country or culture
heritage (**hair** uh tij) Valuable, important traditions handed down from generation to generation

Making the Journey



Large numbers of people did not begin to settle in Wisconsin until after the Erie Canal was completed in 1825. Many early settlers came from New York state. These settlers included the European immigrants who landed in the port of New York City. People could travel up the Hudson River, go through the Erie Canal, reach Lake Erie, and sail to a Wisconsin port without having to travel over land.

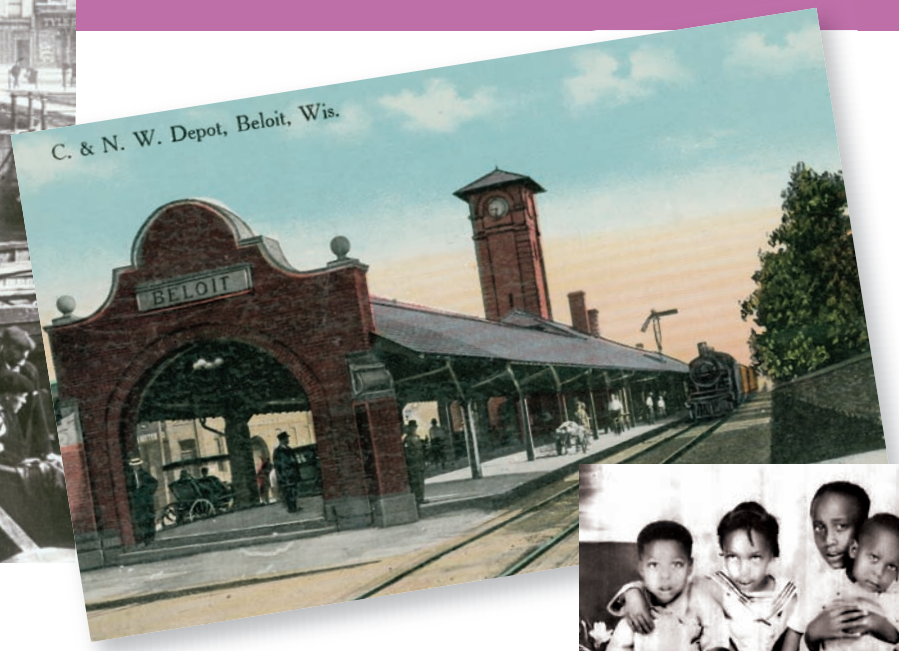
How has travel changed over time for people moving to Wisconsin?

Until the past 50 years, most people traveled by water across the Atlantic or Pacific oceans to reach the United States from other countries. The building of railroads in the mid-1800s was a turning point in overland travel. Two other turning points—the invention of the automobile and the creation of airplanes—came early in the 1900s. People didn't start driving on interstates or flying as passengers from Europe or Asia until the mid-1900s.

Early journeys to Wisconsin took a great deal of time and effort. Now people can move much more rapidly to Wisconsin from another country or from another place in the United States. When did members of your family come to Wisconsin? How did they get here? Where did they settle first?

Waterways connected people and land separated them before railroads, automobiles, and planes. People traveling to Wisconsin during most of the 1800s from distant parts of the United States crossed the Great Lakes or came up the Mississippi River. It was the easiest and cheapest way to reach the state.

This photo shows a ship of people **emigrating** from Queenstown, Ireland, and heading to the United States. In the mid-1800s, most people in Ireland were poor farmers who grew potatoes. When a potato **blight** ruined potato crops in the mid-1840s, nearly one million people died. Another one million left Ireland. Those lucky enough to leave emigrated on ships like this one. Many were starving and died on the journey. Some of those who survived traveled on to Wisconsin.



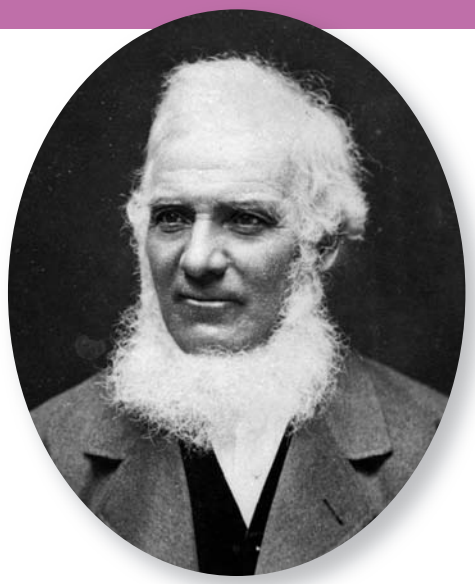
The Harrell family, at right, got off the train in Beloit at the Chicago & North Western **Depot**. The depot is shown in this postcard from the early 1900s.

This is a photo of children in the Harrell family in 1942. The Harrell family worked as **sharecroppers** in Mississippi. Then they moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where their father, William, got a job making baseball bats. In 1943, the Harrells took the train to Beloit, Wisconsin, where William could make more money working in a **foundry**. Many other African American families had similar experiences. They also moved north in the 1900s for better-paying **industrial** jobs. This was called the Great Migration.

In July 2004, members of the Madison area **Hmong** community gathered at the Dane County Regional Airport to welcome Lor family members who were emigrating from **Thailand** to Wisconsin. The Lors were joining other family already living in Madison.

emigrating (**em** uh gray ting) Leaving one's own country to settle in another **blight** Disease
Depot (**dee** poh) A railroad station building where people arrive and depart on trains **Hmong** (mong) A language and group of people from Southeast Asia
Thailand (**tI** land) A country in Southeast Asia
sharecroppers Farmers who were so poor that they had no money to rent the land they farmed. To live on the land, they gave the landowner a "share" of what they produced.
foundry A factory where metal is melted and shaped **industrial** Having to do with factories

A Stonemason in Cornwall, England, Comes to Mineral Point



In 1842, **stonemason** Richard Thomas **emigrated** from Cornwall, England, to Mineral Point. This photo of him was taken many years after he arrived. He died when he was 69 years old. His **obituary** read, "He was industrious and kind-hearted, and his memory will long be cherished."

Why did Richard Thomas settle in Wisconsin?

In the spring of 1842, Richard Thomas sailed from Cornwall, England, to New York. He was 25 years old. He grew up in Redruth, a village in the heart of the copper and tin mining area of Cornwall. His father was a stonemason and his mother worked in farm fields as well as at home. Richard's parents' greatest wish was to save enough money for their family to **emigrate** to America. They believed their children would have better opportunities to make a living and own land in the United States than in Cornwall. When he was old enough, Richard became an **apprentice** to a stonemason, and he attended night school.

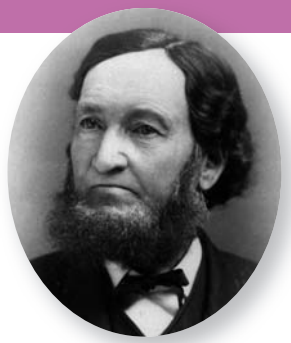
Richard was the first in his family to emigrate. He traveled from New York to Mineral Point, Wisconsin, where many other Cornish immigrants were settling to work as lead miners. In late 1842 or early 1843, Richard Thomas and his business partner, James Carbis, built a two-story stone house on Hoard Street in Mineral Point. They built it in the same style as those in the villages of Cornwall, with two rooms upstairs and two rooms downstairs. Richard and James built their Hoard Street house of local stone **quarried** nearby.

Cornwall is the most southwestern county of England. Cornish people immigrated to southwestern Wisconsin between about 1836 and 1848. Many came to mine lead ore. Others, like Richard Thomas, came to build houses for the growing population.

stonemason A person skilled in building with stone **emigrated** (**em** uh gray tuhd) Left one's own country to settle in another
obituary (o **bit** chu air ee) A printed report of someone's death, often in the newspaper **emigrate** (**em** uh grayt) To leave one's country to settle in another
apprentice (uh **pren** tuhs) A person learning a trade or art **quarried** (**kwor** eed) Dug out

The two-story house on the right in this picture is the first house that Richard Thomas and James Carbis built. Two years later, in 1845, they built the single-story house on the left in this photo. It was a traditional miner's cottage similar to those they had built in Redruth, Cornwall.

Here is a more recent photo of the two houses built by Richard and James. Between 1935 and 1940, Robert Neal and Edgar Hellum restored both buildings. They named the two-story house Trelawny and the single-story house Pendarvis. In the 1960s, the name of Hoard Street was changed to Shake Rag Street to remember the Cornish miners who once worked nearby. Today you can visit the Trelawny and Pendarvis houses between May and October. They are now part of Pendarvis Historic Site, owned by the Wisconsin Historical Society.



This is a photo of James Carbis, a second Cornish stonemason who settled in Mineral Point in 1842. He and his wife, Elizabeth, raised five children: James, Susan, John, Sarah, and Fred. They were all born in Mineral Point. As business partners, James Carbis and Richard Thomas built several stone houses there over a 30-year period.

What was life like for Richard Thomas in Mineral Point?

Richard married Elizabeth Johns in 1843, but she died three years later. His parents, Sampson and Susanna Thomas, had arrived from Cornwall in 1844, along with his sister, her husband, and their child. They all moved into the house on Hoard Street with Richard, who was now a **widower.** His business partner James and James's wife and son also lived there. The house was now home to seven adults and two children. The neighborhood was also full of Cornish immigrants. By the time Wisconsin became a state in 1848, Richard had been living in Mineral Point for six years. **Census** records show that their neighbors were the Williams, Tregaskis, Uren, Prideaux, Remfrey, and Goldsworthy families. Most of these men worked as lead miners. Eventually the Thomases moved out of the neighborhood to a larger wood-frame house. The Carbis family continued to live in the Hoard Street house until 1862.

As Mineral Point stonemasons and builders, Richard Thomas and James Carbis worked together until about 1870. Occasionally, Richard's father, Sampson, helped them cut, cure, and place the local sandstone. Not only did they build small stone cottages for their neighbors, they also built a large stone **mansion** for Cornish immigrant Joseph Gundry. Mr. Gundry owned and operated a dry goods store on High Street, Mineral Point's main street.

widower (**wid** oh ur) A man whose wife has died **Census** (**sen** suhs) An official count of all people living in a country or district **mansion** (**man** shun) A very large house

Free at Last

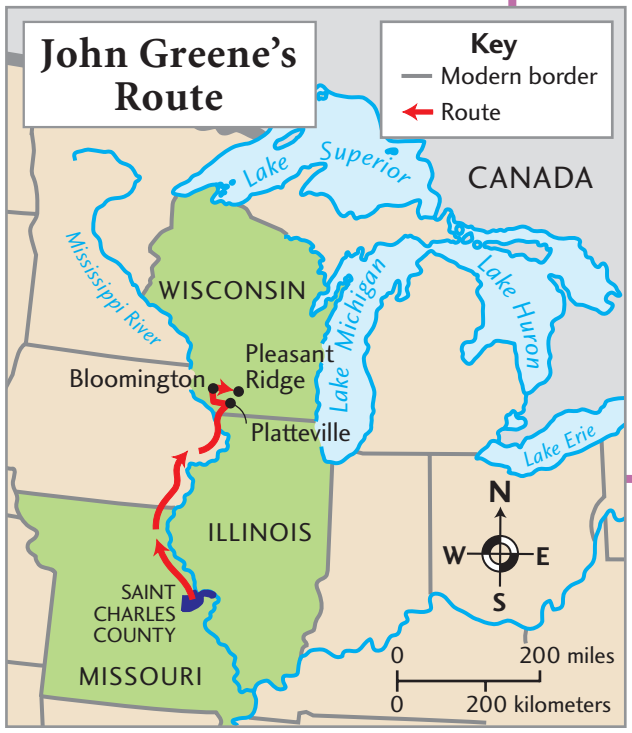
John Greene and his family became some of the pioneer African American settlers in the Pleasant Ridge community in Grant County in the Western Upland region.

How did John Greene and his family escape slavery to reach Wisconsin?

In 1810, John Greene was born a **slave** in Virginia. As an adult, both he and his wife, Lillie, were slaves owned by the Griffith family in Saint Charles County, Missouri. In 1863, during the Civil War, John and Lillie Smith Greene escaped from the Griffiths' farm. They traveled north to freedom with their children and grandchildren.

Many slave families in the southern United States had been broken up when the slave owners sold one or more family members. The Greene family wanted to escape **slavery** to keep the family together. The Greenes had made one other attempt to escape. But they were captured and brought back before they got very far from the Griffiths' farm. The second time, the Greenes took the little money that they'd saved. Then they started out when it was already dark. The Greenes used some of their savings to buy train tickets. They made at least part of the journey north by rail.

The Greenes spent their first winter in Bloomington, Wisconsin —in Grant County in the Western Upland region. Then, they moved about 10 miles to Pleasant Ridge. There they became farmers. They probably rented land on which to work or helped other farmers. Five years after being the property of the Griffith family, John Greene and his oldest son, Hardy, were able to buy property of their own: farmland in Pleasant Ridge.



The Greenes' son, Thomas, remembered that the family traveled this route from **slavery** in Missouri to freedom in Wisconsin.

slavery The practice of owning people and making them work
slave Someone who is owned by another person

The cemetery of the United Brethren Church in Grant County contains the gravestones of many Greene family members. You can see **replicas** of these graves in the church cemetery at Old World Wisconsin. What kinds of things can you learn about a community and the people who have lived there by visiting a cemetery?

In 1874, the European American and African American farm families of Pleasant Ridge built a small log school for all the children of the community when they **established** and **supervised** School District Five. This school was one of the earliest **integrated** schools in the nation.

What was life like for the Greene family and other African Americans at Pleasant Ridge?

Everyone who settled in Pleasant Ridge in the last half of the 1800s came for new opportunities for their families. These families were escaped or **emancipated** African American slaves, immigrant Europeans, and European Americans. Both African American and European American families were welcome in the tiny community of Pleasant Ridge.

These farm families worked hard. They needed one another's help to survive. The Greenes did not become wealthy. But they managed to make a living on their own land. They were also well-liked by their neighbors.

All community children attended the **integrated** one-room school of District Five. All the families gathered there for community events such as picnics, sports, and dances.

German immigrant families built their own German-language Methodist church. English-speaking families, both black and white, built their own United Brethren Church with help from the Germans. Families often joined at the church for prayer meetings. They also helped one another take care of the church buildings.

From the 1860s through the 1880s, Pleasant Ridge attracted settlers like the Greenes. All were looking for opportunities to make their lives better. From the late 1880s on, however, children grew up and began to look elsewhere for still better opportunities. Fast-growing cities offered different kinds of work. Pleasant Ridge began to lose many of those who lived there. By the mid-1930s, the entire community had moved to other places.

Mildred Greene was the last person living to have grown up at Pleasant Ridge. In the late 1990s, she remembered what she learned there. "We were taught to love each other and so we did. Most everyone was a farmer and so they relied on each other for help." Perhaps her best memory was that living there, "I never paid any attention to skin color. People were just people."

replicas (**rep** luh kuhz) Exact copies **established** (ess **tab** lish tuhd) Set up something, such as a school, church, club, or business **supervised** (**soo** puhr vIzd) Watched over or directed **integrated** (in tuh **gray** tuhd) Included people of all races **emancipated** (i **man** suh pay tuhd) Legally freed from slavery

A German Farmstead in Washington County

This is the **Koepsell** farmhouse in Washington County. Friedrich Koepsell cut the logs and built the large house himself in 1859. He used a building style that was traditional to his homeland in **Pomerania**. This type of building is called half-timber.

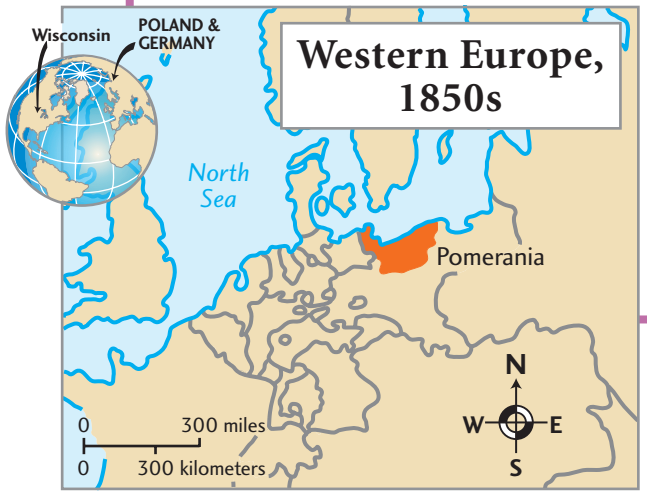
Why did the Koepsell family move from Pomerania to settle in Wisconsin?

In 1857 **Friedrich** and Sophia **Koepsell** and their three children emigrated from **Pomerania** to Wisconsin. Friedrich was born in a village in Pomerania in north central Europe. He was 38 years old and his wife was 30 years old when they arrived in Quebec, Canada. Then they made their way to Wisconsin. Their two young daughters and son came with them.

Friedrich's brother, Carl, had come to Wisconsin in 1843 with a religious group called the Old Lutherans. They left Pomerania and came to Wisconsin so that they could be free to practice their Old Lutheran religious beliefs. They settled in an area northwest of Milwaukee in Washington County. They called their German-speaking settlement **Kirchhayn**, a word that means "church in the wildwoods."

Perhaps Friedrich also wanted his family to grow up in the Old Lutheran tradition in Wisconsin. As a carpenter, Friedrich would also have more opportunities to build in Kirchhayn where people were moving. Friedrich built his own house in Kirchhayn in 1859 on 40 acres of land. That same year Sophia gave birth to a second son.

In the 1850s, the Koepsell family immigrated to Wisconsin from Pomerania. Pomerania is now part of both Germany and Poland. Between 1839 and 1893, many **Pomeranian** people came to Wisconsin to live.



Koepsell (**kep** suhl) **Pomerania** (pom uh **ray** nee uh) **Pomeranian** (pom uh **ray** nee uhn)
Friedrich (**free** drik) **Kirchhayn** (**keer** kIn)

Friedrich and Sophia Koepsell came to Wisconsin in 1857. Together they raised their seven children and farmed 130 acres.

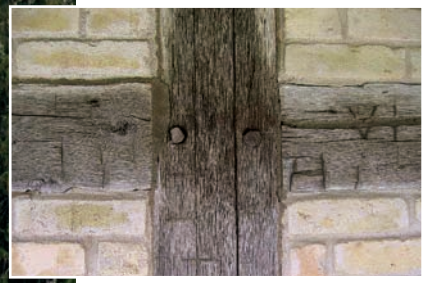
Here's a photo of the Koepsell family's dining room. Today you can visit the Koepsell farmhouse with your family. It has been moved from Washington County and rebuilt at Old World Wisconsin. Sophia and her daughters cooked and baked for the family. They may have eaten apple **kuchen,** traditional German cake baked with apples picked from trees on the farm.

What was life like for the Koepsells in Kirchhayn in Washington County?

Friedrich was both a farmer and a skilled carpenter. He built and developed his own farm. Then he also built houses and farm buildings for people in the Kirchhayn area. During the first ten years, Friedrich enlarged the farm from 40 acres to 130 acres. He farmed some of the land. Perhaps he harvested logs for building from the rest of it. He built barns, a machine shed, and an outhouse for his own family farm. Using one team of horses to farm, he grew hay and raised dairy cows, beef cows, sheep, and pigs. Friedrich also grew a lot of barley. He may have sold it to local brewers to make beer.

Sophia and Friedrich had three more children. The older Koepsell children helped take care of the apple trees, the large vegetable garden, and the large potato field for family eating. They worked on the farm, in the farmyard, and in the farmhouse until they married and moved away. In 1886, when Friedrich was 67 and Sophia was 59, they sold the farm where they had lived for 27 years.

kuchen (**koo** kuhn)



Take a close look at this detail of the half-timber building style. It is called "half-timber" because it is part wood—or timber—and part brick.

From Finland to Bayfield County

Why did the Ketola family choose to come to Northern Wisconsin?

In the spring of 1889, **Heikki** Ketola left Finland and traveled by steamboat to New York. He was 26 years old. He left his wife, Maria, and their five children at home in Finland when he immigrated to the United States. He wanted to own land and be a farmer. It was nine years before he had saved enough money to bring his family to join him. When Heikki first arrived, he worked at two different Lake Erie ports in Ohio for about three and a half years. Then he learned that other Finns were settling in northern Wisconsin. He left Ohio and moved to the town of **Oulu** in the northwestern corner of Bayfield County, Wisconsin.

On December 13, 1892, Heikki entered a **homestead** claim to 80 acres of land. The Homestead Act was a national law of 1862 that gave people the opportunity to own land without paying cash for it. In exchange for the **deed** proving ownership, they had to build a house on the land and live there. They had to clear and farm a certain number of acres.

Between 1893 and 1898, Heikki built and lived in a log house that measured 15 by 17 feet on the land that he claimed. That's about as large as today's single-car garages. He cleared trees, stumps, brush, and stones from about seven acres. He also built a log barn for one horse and six cows.

In 1898, he sent enough money to Maria and their children so they could travel from Finland to Wisconsin. He built an addition to the house the same year with logs he had cut. Soon they had three more children and needed more room, so Heikki built on a second addition!

This is the **Heikki** and Maria **Ketola** family outside their log home in Bayfield County. Heikki built the house himself in three sections between 1893 and 1900. The homemade ladders were mounted on the house so Heikki could quickly climb to the roof to put out chimney fires.

Finland is a heavily forested country with small amounts of good farmland. Finnish people immigrated to northern Wisconsin between about 1890 and 1920. Many came to farm. Others worked in the iron mines.

Heikki (**hay** kee) **Ketola** (**keh** tuh luh)
Oulu (**oo** loo)
homestead A house with its buildings and grounds; farm with all its buildings
deed A document that proves ownership of the land

Maria knit mittens, socks, and shawls from wool provided by their sheep. She fed and milked the cows and worked in the large vegetable garden and potato field. Neighbors described Maria as very kind but very serious.

Maria and Heikki traveled to their neighbors' farms to attend church services before the church was built. Church records show that Heikki changed his name to Henry Getto. This process is called "Americanizing" immigrant names.

In this photo, you can see a small log barn that Heikki built. On their growing farm, he also built an outhouse, granary, and **sauna** in which to bathe. Most Finnish farms in northern Wisconsin had saunas. Families used the saunas every Wednesday and Saturday. You can visit the Ketola house and the sauna at Old World Wisconsin near Eagle in Waukesha County. It is preserved there so that visitors can easily see what life was like on a traditional Finnish American farm in Wisconsin.

What was life like for the Ketolas in Oulu?

By 1902, Heikki had been in the United States for 13 years. He had provided a home and farm for his wife, Maria, and their children. He built two hay sheds to store the hay he grew. He also built a large **root cellar** to store **rutabagas** to feed his cows and potatoes to feed his family.

Everyone in the family worked hard, but farming in Bayfield County was difficult. The growing season is short in northern Wisconsin. Enlarging the farm meant more hard work clearing trees and stumps. To help make ends meet, Heikki worked at a different job off the farm a few months every year to earn cash for things they couldn't grow or build. Then he began selling telephones, cream separators, and farm equipment.

The older children married and moved from the farm. The younger children attended school, learned to speak English, and became "Americanized" like the other children at school. Heikki and Maria celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary in 1951. Maria passed away a few months later at the age of 92. Heikki died in 1954 at the age of 91. Their sons, Oscar and Fred, continued to live in the log house on their parents' farm.

This 2007 photo is of a baked pancake called **pannu kakkuu**. Maria and her daughters baked pannu kakkuu. It tasted good with maple syrup and made good use of the farm's daily supply of milk and eggs.

sauna (**saw** nuh) A Finnish bath that uses dry heat, or a bath where steam is made by throwing water on hot stones **pannu kakkuu** (**pah** noo **kah** ku)
root cellar A room underground for storing root vegetables **rutabagas** (**roo** tah bay guhs) Large pale-yellow root vegetables sometimes called "Swedish turnips"
granary (**gran** uh ree) A building for storing grain

Lucky to Be in America

How did Rosa Goldberg Katz survive the Holocaust and come to Wisconsin?

Beginning in 1939, Rosa's life in Hitler-controlled Europe was terrifying. The map shows the locations in Poland and Germany, but not the horrors, that Rosa experienced.

In 1924, Rosa Goldberg was born in **Lodz**, Poland, into a wealthy Jewish family. She was the youngest of four children. When Rosa was only 15 years old, **Nazi** German troops **invaded** Poland. A few months later, all of the Jews in Lodz were forced to leave their homes and move into a **ghetto** in the poorest part of the city. The Goldbergs crammed into a tiny apartment with seven other people. This was the beginning of the nightmare that destroyed the world Rosa had known.

Soldiers took Rosa's mother and many Jews away from their families. Their families never saw them again. Finally, the Germans forced all the Jews in the ghetto onto trains. The trains took them to **death camps**, such as **Auschwitz**. That's where Rosa and her remaining family went. Men and boys were immediately separated from women and girls. Rosa never saw her father or brother again.

Rosa was sure that she, too, would soon be killed. But, days later, German soldiers made a mistake that saved her life. They did not realize that she and the other 499 other women in a field were due to be murdered. The soldiers mistook them for French prisoners, pushed them onto another train car, and shipped them to the German city of Berlin. The women had to work in a factory assembling bombs.

Rosa was later shipped to another death camp at Ravensbrück, Germany. Then the Swedish Red Cross freed the prisoners and helped them get to Sweden to recover.

After Rosa regained her strength, she met and fell in love with another refugee and **Holocaust** survivor, Bernard Katz. He emigrated to the United States first. In 1948, Bernard returned to marry her, and the two made their first home in Statesville, North Carolina. That's where Bernard's relatives had helped him find a job. Five years later, in 1953, Bernard's work brought them to Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Lodz (Looj) **Nazi** (**not** zee) Describing the followers of Adolf Hitler who wanted to rid Europe of Jews and other peoples of Europe they considered "impure" **invaded** Entered by force **ghetto** A neighborhood in a European city where Jews were forced to live **death camps** Places designed to kill many Jewish people at one time **Auschwitz** (**oush** vitz) **Holocaust** (**hol** uh kost) The planned murder of the Jews in Europe in the 1940s in which 6 million Jews, and others, were killed

Rosa Goldberg (second from left) was a 10-year-old Jewish girl when this picture was taken. Here she is with her family in 1934. Less than 10 years later, she was the only one in this photograph who had not been killed during the Holocaust. The Holocaust occurred during World War II. That's when the Nazi German government, led by Adolf Hitler, **systematically** destroyed 6 million European Jews and others.

What was life like for Rosa and her family in Oshkosh?

Rosa found that many things helped make the move to Oshkosh successful. The Katzes' closest friends from Statesville also moved to Oshkosh. Oshkosh had a larger Jewish community. The Katzes joined the **synagogue** right away. By the time they moved to Oshkosh, Rosa's English had improved. Both she and Bernard spoke only English at home. They wanted their children to fit in with the other children they met at school and in the neighborhood.

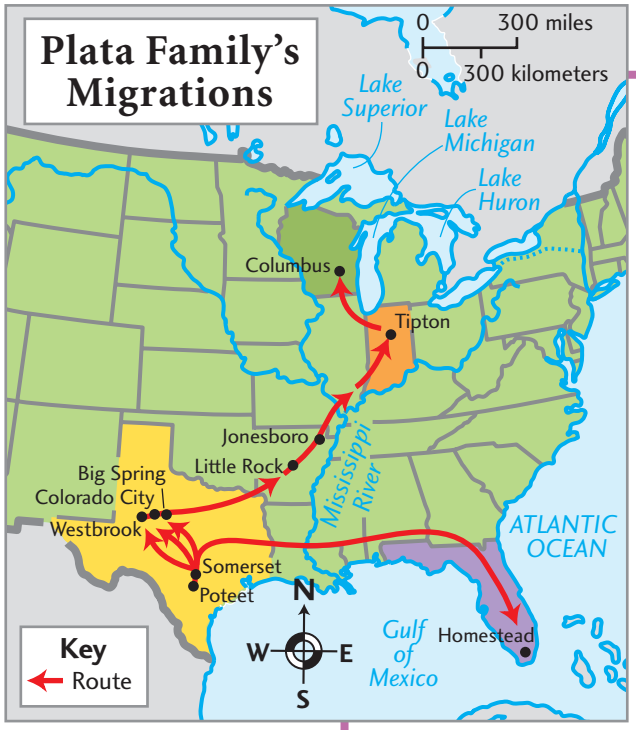
Rosa did not share her Holocaust story with her own children as they were growing up. "I wanted them to be well-adjusted, happy little kids," she later said. When Rosa told her story to the **oral historian** who recorded it for the Wisconsin Historical Society in 1980, Rosa had extra copies made for her grown-up children. "God forbid something like this should happen to anybody, especially my own children. It should never happen again."

In 1994, Rosa took part in a video, *We Must Never Forget: The Story of the Holocaust*, made to be used in classrooms. Her last lines in the video expressed her deepest feelings: "And I just want to point to all of us—how lucky we are to be in a country like America."

In 1979, the Katz family celebrated younger daughter Marilyn's **bat mitzvah** at their **synagogue** in Oshkosh. From left to right, you see Ruthie, Rosa, Marilyn, and son Arthur's wife, Sue. Bernard and Arthur are standing behind them. Rosa said, "We are proud to be Jewish . . . Since I am the only one to survive, I ask, 'Why did I survive?' And then I am blessed with four beautiful children, and I think, that's why I survived . . . I want to pass my religion on."

systematically (sis tuh **mat** ik lee) In a systematic or planned way
bat mitzvah (bot **mits** vuh) In Hebrew, the words mean "Daughter of the Commandment." It's a Jewish ceremony in which a 13-year-old girl assumes responsibility as an adult by learning Hebrew and leading a religious service. The ceremony for boys is called a bar mitzvah.
synagogue (**sin** uh gog) Place of Jewish worship **tragedies** (**traj** uh deez) Very sad events **oral historian** A historian who talks to people to research their stories

Bringing Texas North to Wisconsin



The map shows where the family drove from their home near Poteet, Texas, to places where they harvested crops in different parts of the United States at different seasons.

What brought the Plata family to Wisconsin each spring?

Cris **Plata** is a Mexican American singer-songwriter and musician. He lives with his wife, Ann, on their small farm in Columbia County. Although Cris considered Wisconsin his home once he was a young adult, he spent much of his childhood **migrating** back and forth between Wisconsin and Texas.

Cris was born on a ranch near Poteet, Texas, on November 26, 1954. He is the youngest of three sons. His mother was from the nearby city of San Antonio. Cris's family lived in the basement in the same house with his aunt and her family. The two families managed the **livestock** and took care of the ranch for the owners.

Cris's father was a skilled mechanic who was born in Mexico. He gave his children a choice between going to school or helping the family. When Cris got old enough to see how hard his parents and older brothers worked in the fields, he decided to go to school. Cris said that before he started first grade in western Texas, "My brothers taught me the ABC's, and how to say my name, and the year and month that I was born, and that was all the English I knew." Cris learned easily because he wanted to speak like the other children in his class. But it was hard changing schools so many times during the year.

For most of Cris's childhood, he and his family were **migrant workers**. Cris's family began migrating to Wisconsin when he was 11. His dad found work driving a pea **combine** in Astico, near Columbus. Every year they arrived in April and left in October. Cris found education better in Columbus, so he would get ahead in Wisconsin, then stay ahead when he went back to school in Texas the following October.

Plata (**plah** tuh) **migrating** Moving from one region of the country to another **livestock** Farm animals
migrant workers People who move from place to place to help harvest crops **combine** (**kom** bIn) A machine on a farm, driven by a person, to harvest crops

This cover of Cris's 2003 CD, *Life Is Hard*, shows him at age six with his BB gun in western Texas where the Platas spent the winter months. They were part of a large number of Mexican Americans who migrated there to pick cotton at the height of the harvest. Cris's nickname was **Chato**, which means "chubby cheeks" in Spanish. Can you tell why?

Why did Cris make Wisconsin home?

Music was always important to the Plata family. Cris's father and brothers all played guitar, mandolin, and accordion. His mother was a singer who taught everyone else to sing. The radio up north had no Spanish stations, so migrant workers made music themselves in the evenings. Tex-Mex music making was like bringing "a little piece of home with you," Cris said.

After he graduated from high school in Somerset, Texas, Cris went to St. Edward's College in Austin. The city was then a growing center for folk and country music. He felt more drawn to photography and the music written and performed by local musicians than to his studies. He began writing songs and playing music with groups of musician friends. Cris wanted his music to capture the same feelings for Texas that he tried to capture in photographs. For the next few years, he worked, studied photography, and developed his skills as a singer-songwriter in Austin and Dallas.

In 1976, Cris returned to Wisconsin and met his future wife, Ann. Ann grew up on her family's century-old German American farm near Columbus. It was not far from where Cris's family was doing migrant work. They married the next year and moved to Minneapolis for Ann to attend **veterinary** school.

Cris and his band performed at **Fiesta Hispana** in Madison in the early 1990s.

Cris began to play music full-time. But he got tired of being on the road. It was too much like being a migrant worker. In 1980, Ann graduated and began working in Minnesota. Then, she found a job working with a **veterinarian** she knew in the Madison area. The Platas happily moved back. They bought a small house and an acre and a half of land of her family's farm. They bought horses and grew vegetables. Cris's own songs now included Mexican American stories, first in English and then in Spanish as well.

Cris found work that allowed him time to balance music and the life he and Ann enjoyed in the country. His parking and security job in Madison allows him to have enough time to stay connected to the land. Because he had constantly traveled as a child and young man, he loves living on the farm. The Platas make their own **salsa** from their own peppers, onions, and tomatoes. In caring for his horses and land, in his food, and in his music, Cris enjoys working "to bring Texas to Wisconsin."

Chato (**chah** to) **Fiesta Hispana** (fee **es** tah ees **pah** nah) **veterinary** (**vet** ur uh nair ee) Having to do with animal medicine or surgery
veterinarian (**vet** ur uh nair ee uhn) A doctor who treats animals **salsa** (**sahl** sah)

Mai Ya's Long Journey from Thailand to Wisconsin

BOB RASHID

Mai Ya is wearing a traditional Hmong dress and turban at a Hmong New Year celebration in Madison, Wisconsin.

Like many Hmong people, Mai Ya's parents lived in a quiet mountain village in **Laos** before the Vietnam War became a turning point in their lives.

Why did Mai Ya and her family live in a refugee camp in Thailand?

Mai Ya Xiong and her family are Hmong. In 1979, her mother and her father had escaped from their home in **Laos**. They made their way to Thailand on foot. Mai Ya was born there the following year in a **refugee camp** called **Ban Vinai**. Most of the people in the refugee camp were also Hmong. They had also escaped from their villages in Laos. Life had become too dangerous to keep living there.

In the 1960s, the United States had entered into a war to help the people of South Vietnam. The government asked and then trained young Hmong men to form a secret army. Mai Ya's father was part of that army. But the United States was unsuccessful. In 1973, U.S. troops left Vietnam. Two years later, North Vietnam won the war. Then, Hmong families were in danger from enemy troops. Many of the Hmong families, like Mai Ya's, had to hide in the forests and jungles. They had to move every few days so the soldiers would not catch them. Finally, they crossed the Mekong River to Thailand. They found safety at Ban Vinai.

Mai Ya Xiong (**m**I yah shong) **Laos** (**lah** ohs) **Thailand** (**tI** land)
refugee camp A safe place for people forced to leave their homes by war or disaster **Ban Vinai** (ban vin I)

When Mai Ya came to Wisconsin, she had two younger brothers and two younger sisters. They were all born in the refugee camp in Thailand.

To move to the United States, Hmong people needed a **sponsor**. Mai Ya's uncle was her family's sponsor.

What was life like for Mai Ya in Wisconsin?

In 1987, Mai Ya was seven years old. That's when her family finally was allowed to leave the refugee camp. They came to live in Madison. They traveled in a large airplane. At first the family of seven shared their uncle's apartment. For the first time, they had their own running water, a stove, and a refrigerator. It was very different from the mountain village in Laos or the crowded space they shared in the refugee camp. The weather in Wisconsin was also different from the weather in Thailand. Mai Ya and her brothers and sisters had never seen snow before!

Mai Ya and her parents didn't know how to read or write English when they arrived. Mai Ya started second grade. She took English as a Second Language class to help her understand what her teachers and classmates were saying. By the time she was in seventh grade, she was comfortable speaking in class and with her friends. Yet at home, she and her family spoke only in Hmong. Sometimes it was hard for Mai Ya to go back and forth between the English-speaking and Hmong worlds.

In 1998, 11 years after arriving in Madison, Mai Ya graduated from high school. Then in 2004, she graduated from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. There she studied business and marketing. But she also taught young Hmong-American girls the traditional Hmong dances. She has learned how to build a new life in a new country. Yet she still holds on to her Hmong language and to some of her Hmong customs that she loves. You can read more details about her life and family in *Mai Ya's Long Journey* by Sheila Cohen.

BOB RASHID

Mai Ya's youngest brother, Andrew, was born in Madison. She helped him learn the English language. She also told him about growing up in Thailand. Part of her Hmong heritage means being connected to her family.

MARCUS COHEN

As a university student, Mai Ya said, "I am proud to be Hmong. And what would be lost if we don't preserve some of our traditions? We will eventually lose who we are. That would be a big loss."

sponsor A person, people, or organization that agrees to help refugees who enter the country

Looking Back at Immigration and Settlement in Wisconsin

PUSH FACTORS	PULL FACTORS
Too many people living in one place to make a decent living	Good, affordable farmland to support a family
Not enough jobs or not enough food	Better-paying jobs and plenty of food
Other relatives and friends have already left and found some success elsewhere	Letters from family and friends who have moved
People must follow only certain religious faiths	People can follow any religious faith
Not all people are treated fairly	People are treated equally
War	Peace
Natural disaster	Better place to start over

This chart shows some of the reasons that people feel pushed from their homelands and pulled to new opportunities in another country.

This photo shows Cris Plata's father, Crístobal Sr., as a young man. He is standing next to his mother, Luisa. They are at the entrance to their home made of stones and soil in the mountains of the state of **Jalisco** in central Mexico.

What have you learned about why people immigrated and migrated to Wisconsin?

In this chapter, you have read seven different immigration and migration stories of families who came to live in Wisconsin. They each traveled from different places and at different times in history. And they each settled in different parts of Wisconsin. Their journey stories span 138 years—between 1842 and 1987. That's a very long time. Many things in Wisconsin and in the world changed during those years. But people's desires to make their lives, and the lives of their families, better have not changed.

Some of the people in these stories journeyed to Wisconsin as adults alone. Some were married. Some brought their entire families. Others came as children. Although they came at different times, for different reasons, all faced challenges and struggles. In what ways are their stories similar? How are they different? What have you learned about the push and pull **factors** of immigration and migration from these stories? Do you have new questions about your own family's story? Or are you someone who has made the journey to Wisconsin yourself?

Jalisco (hah **lees** ko) **factors** Any one of the causes that helps bring about a result

How do people make a new life in a new place?

When you go on a trip, do you take something along that reminds you of home? Perhaps you pack one of your favorite books, games, or stuffed animals to keep you from feeling homesick. When immigrants and migrants leave their homelands to move to a new place, they often take things along. These belongings remind them who they are and where they've come from. These things include china, photographs, tools, and religious objects that hold special meaning for them.

Newcomers also bring along things like traditions and ideas that they can't pack in a suitcase. All the people in the stories in this chapter found ways to keep some of their own traditions as they built new lives. For example, when Friedrich Koepsell came to Kirchhayn from Pomerania, he built his family a new house in a new land. But he built this house the way the houses were built back home in Pomerania. He did this to help his family feel at home in a strange place, and to help remind them of their homeland.

What are some other ways people keep traditions they value? What stories does your family tell to remind you of where you came from? What holidays do you celebrate? What special foods do you eat to honor your traditions?

These are the **Stoughton** High School Norwegian Dancers. They celebrate their Norwegian American heritage by dancing traditional folk dances and wearing traditional dance clothing.

Stoughton (**stoh** tuhn)

Some Places to Visit

- Chippewa Valley Museum in Eau Claire
- Jewish Museum in Milwaukee
- Neville Public Museum in Green Bay
- Old World Wisconsin Historic Site in Eagle
- Pendarvis Historic Site in Mineral Point
- Wisconsin Black Historical Society in Milwaukee
- Wisconsin Historical Museum in Madison

Some Things to Read

- *Casper Jaggi: Master Swiss Cheese Maker* by Jerry Apps
- *Caroline Quarlls and the Underground Railroad* by Julia Pferdehirt
- *Mai Ya's Long Journey* by Sheila Cohen
- *Native People of Wisconsin* by Patty Loew Chapters 5–8
- *A Recipe for Success: Lizzie Kander and Her Cookbook* by Bob Kann
- *They Came to Wisconsin* by Julia Pferdehirt