Why did they come to North Dakota?

Scandinavians: for North Dakota that means Norwegians, Swedes, Danes, Icelanders, and Finns, descending in percentage of population. In the Old World, they fought each other for economic and political power for over 600 years, as only cousins will do. They share common language roots and the Lutheran religion. With six years of compulsory education and literacy requirements in their countries, most of the immigrants from Scandinavia were literate before their migration to North Dakota.

In 1910 the population of North Dakota had a Scandinavian complexion: Norwegians - 21.3 percent, Swedes - 4.7 percent, Danes - 2.2 percent, Icelanders - 0.5 percent, and Finns - 0.4 percent. By 1914 roughly 20 percent of all the farmland in North Dakota was owned by Norwegians. They farmed extensively in the eastern quarter, northwestern quarter, and north-central region of the state. Some came to North Dakota “fresh off the boat,” but the vast majority had lived in Minnesota, Wisconsin, or Iowa before moving west.

The multitude of churches dotting the skyline of North Dakota may, in part, be directly linked to the theological and reform conflicts in Scandinavia within the state-sponsored Lutheran church. As a result, many North Dakota communities have two or three churches, all founded by Scandinavian immigrants, each with different philosophical views.

Most Scandinavians adopted English within the first generation and created schools and hospitals to reflect their traditions. Unlike Germans from Russia, Scandinavians quickly embraced the American political tradition. By 1920, township, county, and state government was populated by Norwegians, Swedes, Danes, and Icelanders.

Source:

Don’t miss the HOLLAND AUTOMOBILE!

Check out the Holland Special, a single-cylinder runabout, in the Corridor of History outside of the Inspiration Gallery!

This is the oldest-known surviving North Dakota-built automobile. Samuel Holland (1859-1937) was a Norwegian immigrant to Park River. A skilled blacksmith and machinist, he built at least six automobiles between 1898 and 1908. His Holland Special has a six horse-power engine, cushion tires, and bar-spring suspension. Unlike many early manufacturers of automobiles who usually purchased engines, Holland built this automobile’s engine and most of the body. It sold for $700, a price beyond the range of many families. He continued to build cars until 1908, then began selling cars manufactured by larger companies.
ENCONTERS
Norwegian Trunk, 1868

AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION
Advance Threshing Machine, 1904
Purchased by Sven Carlson, Norwegian emigrant, from Lanterman Lumber Yards, Mandan, for $750.

Flail and Pitchfork, circa 1884
Made and used by John A. Karlson, a Swedish emigrant, on his homestead in Burleigh County.

NEWCOMERS AND SETTLEMENT
Tools for Building and Maintaining Steamboats, 1884-1901
Used by Charles L. Hansen, a veteran of the Danish and US navies. A carpenter by trade, he built and repaired steamboats along the Missouri River.

Coffee mill, 1876
A treasured item brought to America from Iceland by Rannveig Gunlogson.

Icelandic Trunk, 1879
Immigrants carried their worldly possessions over long distances in trunks like these. Trunks were often decorated and included their owner’s name and date. This trunk belonged to Guðelmiður Jóhannesdóttir, a woman who immigrated to Mountain, ND, an Icelandic community.

Sewing Machine, 1870-1879
Given to Ingebjorg Arnason shortly after she immigrated from Iceland in 1878. She used this machine to sew for her two sons and 11 daughters in Pembina County.

Wool Hand Cards
Stina Edman immigrated to Sergeant County from Sweden in 1882. She joined her husband, Gustav, who had established their homestead in 1882. Along with other household goods, she brought a spinning wheel and wool cards. The Edmans owned sheep, whose wool Stina spun and knit into items for her family.

Norwegian Mangle, circa 1850-1875
Mangles were used for pressing cloth. They were traditionally given by a man to the woman he hoped to marry. There’s an old Norwegian saying, “Never trust a man with many mangles.”

Wooden clogs, 1891
Some Norwegian immigrants continued to make their traditional style of work shoes after moving to North Dakota. Owned by Emil Austrom, Burleigh County.

Leather gloves, 1910
Worn by Lena Jorgenson when driving her horse and buggy

Norwegian Spinning Wheel, 1866
Immigrants brought the tools they believed to be most necessary to care for their families and continue their lives in new homes. This one was used by Magrit Olsdattar. It is decorated in the Telemark style.

WAR AND CONFLICT
Red Cross Uniform and equipment, 1918-1919
Born in Norway in 1885, Sarah Sand graduated from nursing school in 1915. She served as a nurse in France during WWI. After the war she worked at the Bismarck Hospital as a nurse.

CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS
Bunad, 1985-1995
Norwegian made using fabric and pattern ordered from Norway

Coverlet, 1850-1879
Norwegian donated by Dora Dahl Mundy

Knit gloves, 1900-1909
Norwegian

Trunk, 1860-1869
Norwegian

Coffeepot, 1863-1868
Norwegian

Rolling pin
Norwegian

Violin, 1890-1899
Norwegian

Stockings, 1945-1950
Norwegian

Collar, 1850-1879
Norwegian

Sweater, 2001-2002
Norwegian

Boots, 1900-1940
Norwegian

Loom, 1880-1889
Norwegian

Made by Ole Solberg.

Painting, 1918-1940
Norwegian

Painted by Gustav I. Gullickson

Spinning wheel, 1870-1890
Swedish

Spinning wheel, 1870-1890
Swedish

Originally owned by Anna and Charles Johnson of Coteau, ND. Brought from Sweden between 1943-1946.