

First Settlers In The Towns North Of Chicago,
by Samuel Ott. (1926)

The first settlers in the Towns North of Chicago, say in Northfield, Wheeling and in Cook County and Deerfield, in Lake County 111. were a class of young, single and married men, smart Americans from the Eastern and Southern States. They squatted on the unsurveyed lands and along the east and south sides of groves and of timber lands, not to plow the prairies, to farm land to make homes for themselves and their families, but to sell at their first chance, to the farmers and for all the money they had. Those people, who plowed the soil and improved the country, did the building, started schools and churches and after paying the government \$1.25 per acre for the land, and then only became the owners, received title to the lands, of them I will name in the three townships mentioned above.

In the year 1831 and 1832, the families of Martin and Jacob Esher, Daniel and Christian Stanger, Jacob Ott and five boys Lorenz, Jacob, Casper, Christian and Phillip and Magdalena and Saloma, these three families came from Baldenheim Elsass Loraine, France in the spring of 1832 in a sail boat to New York City and by canal boat to Buffalo, by ox-team from Buffalo to Warren, Warren Co. Pennsylvania in 1831(7). Four or five single boys of the above named family and one or two Luther boys, Jacob and Peter. They landed in Wheeling, Deerfield and Northfield, they came on rafts to Pittsburg on the Alleghany R. then by boat on the Ohio R., north on the Mississippi R. up the Illinois to LaSalle, Illinois and by foot from LaSalle to Chicago. They did not like Chicago, but the country north around Wheeling did appeal to them so they wrote to Warren Pa. for their folks to come at once to meet them early the next spring 1837(?).

Money was not plenty these times but the five families scraped up enough money to buy horses and wagons and they all came together, overland across Ohio, Indiana through Chicago to meet their sons in the new country at Wheeling, Northfield and Deerfield.

The boys had already bargained for claims for their folks, for teams and wagons and their money which was little or none. Their trip over-land, without roads or bridges, six weeks on the way, cannot be described. They landed and in passing through Chicago, my mother told me that they drove knee-deep in water from the loop to the sand ridge, Grayland Station, now on Milwaukee Avenue, from there on they followed the Indian trail along the divide, called the Continental Divide between the Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean, the water divide of North America, (the Continental Divide is the Rocky Mountains)

The first church was organized in 1838 by the Eshers, Stangers and Otts and a log church built on the high land, the north side of Dundee cement road, was soon too small to hold the many German people that came from different parts of America and Germany. With the increase of big families, the log church became too small, so the people decided in 1841, to move the church to the west street crossing, where they rebuilt another log church, double the size; but the increase of the people and the great interest they took in the church caused them in 1848, to build on the same ground another frame church, 40 by 50 feet. They also built the first school house in Northfield and Wheeling Township. In 1845, the first public school house, a log house, was built in Deerfield, the writer Samuel Ott remembers the first day in school, before the school was finished, and the teacher, Rosina Caldwell, a resident of Deerfield, 111. The Caldwells were early settlers in Deerfield; the school house one mile west was called Wilmot School house and at the present time, 1926, the people of the school district are building a brick school house, the fifth one on the same corner lot.

These early German settlers with a few Americans, in surprizingly quick time made comfortable homes, with churches and schools. As American loving citizens, they raised their children to be some of the best people living in Chicago and in the western states. Whenever you hear the names of Esher, Stanger, Hoffert, Ott, Wessling, Stryker, Brand, Wendling, Woolf, Rockenbach, Bach, Fritch, Miller, Weber, Boxman, Mulkey, Bubert, Kiest, Hess, Arnold, Trier, Henk, Riedlinger, Smith, Deily, Rebmann, Walter, Schnabele, and other descendants, you will find a good class of citizens, no devorces or criminals.

I think over my own families, the Otts, five brothers, two sisters, my uncles and aunts; of all living at present 1926, I, Samuel Ott, son of Lorenz Ott, oldest of the five Ott sons am the Oldest living born in Deerfield in 1841. Our family, after 240 died, still with the fifth generation, have about 250 living. I am proud of my Ott family as I know about all of them, about 500. I never heard of one criminal or drunkard; nearly all own their own homes and believe the 18th Amendment is a good law.

(signed) Samuel Ott
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Copied from a letter of Samuel Ott.
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