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SITE NOS. 36 through 49

NAME Upper Settlement Rural Historic District

LOCATION A 4½-square-mile area within the upper Meridian Creek valley, just east of Cranfills Gap, Texas

PRESENT USE Private residences, agriculture, vacant, religion

CATEGORY District

STATUS Occupied, unoccupied

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
 Johnson-Bertelsen farm (site no. 37)
 Recorded Texas Historic Landmark
 1979
 Texas Historical Commission
 Austin, Texas
 J. Lasson and Oline Reiersen farm (site no. 45)
 Family Land Heritage Program
 1974
 General Land Office
 Austin, Texas

QUADRANGLE NAMES
 Cranfills Gap, Texas
 Sugarloaf Mountain, Texas

QUADRANGLE SCALE
 1:24000

UTM REFERENCE POINTS
 A. 14/618340/3518770 G. 14/618360/3516985
 B. 14/619980/3518550 H. 14/618070/3516000
 C. 14/621000/3518060 I. 14/614620/3515420
 D. 14/621490/3517240 J. 14/612590/3515990
 E. 14/621340/3516420 K. 14/612300/3516510
 F. 14/619620/3516420 L. 14/612820/3516960

ACREAGE
 Approximately 2880 acres

PHOTO REFERENCE NO.
 54 THROUGH 72

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OWNERS

Site No.	Property Name/Description	Owner Name and Mailing Address
36	Christen and Johanne Hansen Farm	Walter Hansen 410 S. Avenue K Clifton, Texas 76634
37	Johnson-Bertelson Farm	Dr. Thomas R. Williams 707 Park Street Gatesville, Texas 76528
38	Hans J. and Petra Hanson Farm	Mrs. C.L. Roberts Star Route 2 Clifton, Texas 76634
39	Olson-Arneson Farm	William C. Scroggin and I. Jon Brumley Southland Royalty Co. 1000 Fort Worth Club Tower Fort Worth, Texas 76109
40	Old St. Olaf's Lutheran Church	Congregation of St. Olaf's Lutheran Church c/o Pastor of St. Olaf's Church Cranfills Gap, Texas 76634
41	Otto and Elene Swensen Farm	Dr. Sheridan and Susan Gibler 3217 Spanish Oak Fort Worth, Texas
42	Bersvend E. and Kari Swenson Farm	A.J. Reierson c/o Curtis Reierson 5739 Lakemont Waco, Texas 76710
43	A.O. and Olia Alfei Farm	A.J. Reierson c/o Curtis Reierson 5739 Lakemont Waco, Texas 76710

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Site No.	Property Name/Description	Owner Name and Mailing Address
44	Peder and Trine Pederson Farm	A.J. Reiersen c/o Curtis Reiersen 5739 Lakemont Waco, Texas 76710
45	O.J. Reiersen Farm	A.J. Reiersen (see above)
46	J.L. and Oline Reiersen Farm	A.J. Reiersen (see above)
47	Amund and Carlin Ilseng Farm	Paul Hoiland 2204 Healey Dallas, Texas 75228
48	Salve and Caroline Knudson Farm	Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Robinson Route 2 Clifton, Texas 76634
49	Knud and Carmeal Knudson Farm	Rose and Billy Gene Green General Delivery Quemado, New Mexico 87829
Not Applicable (N/A)	Non-contributing house on the A.S. Olson tract of land	Walter Popejoy 913 Bonham Grand Prairie, Texas 75050
N/A	Non-contributing house on the L.H. Norderhoug tract of land	Dr. Donald V. Plattner 322 B East Street Grand Prairie, Texas 75050
N/A	Land in the M.P. Jensen Survey, Abstract No. 954	Neal Gardner Route 2 Clifton, Texas 76634

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Site No.	Property Name/Description	Owner Name and Mailing Address
N/A	Land in the Peder Pederson	W.O. Hanson Route 2, Box 34 Meridian, Texas 76665
N/A	Land south of the paved county road in the J.S. Knudson survey, Abstract No. 1150	L.E. Robertson 1536 Proctor Waco, Texas 76708
N/A	.83 acre of land in the K. Knudson survey, Abstract No. 446	William C. Koons 2060 Main Place Dallas, Texas 75250
N/A	Land in the Mrs. B.M. Foss survey, Abstract No. 1102 and land in the B. Rogstad survey, Abstract No. 1114	Milton Linberg Star Route Cranfills Gap, Texas 76634

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Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point located on the southside of an unpaved county road, which connects State Highway 22 and FM 182 and the west boundary of the William M. Smith survey (Abstract No. 769; this and all other patents are filed in the Bosque County Courthouse in Meridian), proceed south along the west property line of the William M. Smith survey until reaching the southwest corner of the Smith survey. Thence east along the south property line of the Smith survey until reaching the 1000-ft. contour line on the Jenson Mountain as indicated on the United States Geological Survey Map (U.S.G.S.) entitled Cranfills Gap, Texas. Thence east along the 1000-ft. contour line on this map, continuing on the U.S.G.S. map entitled Sugarloaf Mountain, Texas, until reaching a point of intersection of this contour line with the south property line of the Knud Knudson survey (Abstract No. 446). Thence east along the south property line of the K. Knudson survey until reaching the southeast corner of the Knudson survey. Thence north along the east property line of the K. Knudson survey until reaching the south side of the previously mentioned county road. Thence west approximately 4.1 miles along the south side of this road until reaching the east side of an unpaved driveway which leads to Old St. Olaf's Church. Thence north on this driveway until reaching the southeast corner of the cemetery. Thence north along the east property line until reaching the northeast corner of the cemetery. Thence west along the property line until reaching the northwest corner of the cemetery. Thence south along the property line until reaching the south side of the paved county road. Thence west along the south side of the road until reaching the point of beginning.

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Description

The boundaries of the Upper Settlement Rural Historic District encompass a 19th-century community that has retained much of its historic character and integrity. As its name connotes, this district is located in a rural setting where much of the land was originally used for farmstead, and is so used today. Within its confines are located 16 sites, 14 of which are classified as contributing properties. These include Old St. Olaf's Church (no. 40) as well as an excellent historical cross-section of 19th-century Norwegian farmhouses and associated outbuildings. Although some of these farmhouses have been abandoned or slightly altered, the overall integrity of their forms and their relationship to the countryside greatly contribute to an understanding of Norwegian pioneer life in Texas in the last half of the 19th century.

Set within the upper Meridian Creek valley, between Jenson and Rogstad Mountains and the creek itself, the Upper Settlement District remains physically separate and distinct from the surrounding area which consists of more level terrain. It is an area of gently rolling hills that has been used for agricultural purposes since it was first settled in the 19th century. In recent years, some land which was originally farmed has been turned to cattle raising, and there has been some encroachment of cedar trees along fence lines and the right-of-way of the county road. This road generally follows the path of Meridian Creek, and has served as the Upper Settlement's major thoroughfare since the 19th century. It was only recently paved. In addition, two unpaved county roads run north-south through passes in the hills, and link the area to the Gary Creek valley. The cedar-post telephone poles that line these roads were erected by the Norse Telephone Company in the early part of this century.

Although all of these features are important, it is ultimately the high concentration of man-made structures which is the critical factor in the establishment of the district. Old St. Olaf's Church, for example, is one of the most prominent landmarks in the entire valley, although farms constitute the bulk of the area's historic resources. Taken together, they represent a thorough cross section of the different architectural styles and periods of the Norwegian settlement. Furthermore, the ensemble of farms gathered around the Bersvend and Kari Swenson homestead are the best-preserved example of an early Norwegian farm community in the county.

Definitions of Contributing and Non-Contributing Elements

Contributing: Contributing properties are those which add to the historic character and integrity of the district, and are the district's most significant historic resources. The built environment is the most important element for this category, and includes

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structures which are over 50 years old which retain much of their historic fabric. All of these contributing structures display features and detailing that are characteristic of the Norwegian settlement area as a whole. Such criteria as association, feeling, design quality, workmanship, scale, proportions, and state of preservation provide the basis for evaluating each property. Of the 16 major structures within the district (excluding outbuildings in counting individual sites), 14 are regarded as contributing. Although these buildings range in date from the early 1860s to the 1910s, a majority were built in the 1870s and 1880s. Historic architectural sites comprise the majority of contributing properties, but several historic archeological sites, such as the Alfei (no. 43) and the Pederson (no. 44) farms, also contribute to the historic character of the district.

Although substantial additions have changed the original appearance of some of these houses, such additions were usually made over 50 years ago, and are characteristic of the architectural evolution of the area. The Knud and Carmel Knudson farm (no. 49), for example, has a late 19th-century, wood-frame addition that more than doubled the floor space and greatly changed the configuration of the original stone house. Because it is more than 50 years old, and because it conforms in style to the Norwegian vernacular tradition, this addition is considered to contribute to the historic character of the property. Thus the entire house is regarded as contributing.

Only two structures have been altered in recent years, and the extent to which these alterations have affected the integrity of the structures is minimal. Therefore, both have been classified as contributing. These houses are located on the Otto and Elene Swenson (no. 41) and the Johnson-Bertelsen (no. 37) farms.

Although the integrity and concentration of architectural sites are vital for the district, the natural environment is another important factor that should not be overlooked. The geographical and topographical features of the district remain virtually unaltered since the late 19th century and greatly enhance the district's sense of cohesiveness. This land retains its open and rural character with a low density of settlement, and it has continued to be used for agricultural purposes since the middle of the 19th century. In addition, man-made objects like the old cedar telephone poles that run along many of the roads comprise additional contributing elements.

Non-contributing: Non-contributing structures are those which detract from the historic character of the district and are regarded as intrusive. Only two of the 16 major buildings within the district are thus classified: the Popejoy farm on the A.S. Olson survey and the Plattner farm on the L.H. Norderhoug survey. Although the age of

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the structures is sufficient for inclusion herein, especially the Plattner house which was built in the early 20th century, neither structure reflects the styles or aesthetic qualities which characterize the contributing properties. They also do not possess features that clearly distinguish them as vernacular Norwegian structures. The ruins of a one-room stone building are located near the Plattner house and indicate some historic archeological potential for the property. Another non-contributing structure within the district is a small mobile home located near on the Ilseng farm (no. 47). This mobile home greatly detracts from the property's visual and historic integrity, but its effect is minimized because it could easily be moved from the farm in the future.

Inventory of Structures

The following inventory of all structures within the district includes the National Register site number, historic name, approximate date of construction and dates of alterations, the category ("contributing" or "non-contributing"), photograph numbers, and a brief discussion of the physical condition.

No. 36. Christen and Johanne Hansen farm (circa 1893), contributing, photo no. 54. This one-and-a-half-story, wood-frame residence is located at the far western edge of the district. The paved county road which serves as the north district boundary cuts through the farm, but the house and barns are within the district. The house is strategically sited on a bluff which overlooks the upper Meridian Creek valley, although the front facade turns away from the valley and looks southwest toward Cranfills Gap. The front is of a symmetrical five-bay composition with a centrally located, single-door entry. A steeply pitched gable extension rises above the entrance and is characteristic of other contemporary frame houses in the Norwegian settlement in Bosque County. Most of the original window sashes have been removed, but those that remain have two-over-two lights set in a sash with a vertical muntin. The original L-shaped plan of the house was changed with the addition of a rear wing about 1947, producing the present U-shaped plan. Because the house has been abandoned and converted into a barn, the interior is in very poor condition. The house is in deteriorated condition overall, and the wooden shingles on the gabled roof have all but disappeared. The outbuildings, which contribute to the historic character of the farm, include one barn of saddle-notched log construction, with board-and-batten siding, and another frame barn covered with clapboards.

No. 37. Johnson-Bertelsen farm (1887/1908/1978), contributing, photo no. 55. The Johnson-Bertelsen house is a stone and wood-frame residence that was heavily remodeled in 1978. The original house was a one-and-a-half-story stone structure built in 1887 which resembled the Otto and Elene Swenson house (no. 42). A wood-frame wing was added in about 1908, and the resulting T-shaped plan was altered again in the most recent renovation. At that time (1978), a garage and connecting hallway were added

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to the southwest corner of the house, and the 1903 entry-porch was enclosed. A new porch and entry-way were also added on the east side of the house, which since 1908 had been the rear elevation. Despite these changes the house still retains enough of its historical character to be classified as contributing. A small, clapboard outbuilding stands to the east of this house, and was covered with board-and-batten siding during the 1978 remodeling.

No. 38. Hans J. and Petra Hanson farm (c. 1870/c. 1900/ 1966), contributing, photo nos. 56, 57. Although in poor but stable condition, the Hanson farm is a good example of a late 19th-century Norwegian pioneer homestead. The original residence (c. 1870) was a one-and-a-half-story stone house with a rectangular plan of the asymmetrical type. Later additions to the stone core include a turn-of-the-century wood-frame "L" and a small shed-roof wing, built in 1966. A large barn of limestone and board-and-batten construction stands near the house, and is surrounded by a 19th-century cedar-post fence. A second, collapsed stone fence is also included on the property.

No. 39. Olson-Arneson farm (c. 1870), contributing, photo no. 58. The Olson-Arneson farm includes a one-and-a-half-story stone house, and commands a majestic view of Old St. Olaf's Church (no. 40). With a rectangular, three-part plan, and an exterior stone chimney at each side, this house bears a striking resemblance to other symmetrical stone houses such as the Ringness (no. 4) and the Keddel and Liv Grimland (no. 9) residences. A stucco finish in excellent repair covers the limestone construction. The five-bay facade features a small porch that extends over the main entryway. Supported by Bungalow-style columns, this porch has alternating rows of toothed wooden shingles in the gable end. Despite the addition of a multiroom brick wing at the rear, and the installation of modern sash windows, the house retains much of its historic integrity. A small, one-room outbuilding of limestone construction stands near the house.

No. 40. Old St. Olaf's Church (1886-1890s), contributing, photo nos. 59, 60. Situated on a hill near the geographic center of the Upper Meridian Creek valley, Old St. Olaf's Church is a large, stuccoed stone building that remains in excellent condition and exhibits some of the most outstanding stone masonry in the entire Norwegian settlement. The plan of the church is rectangular. A wooden-frame bell tower with shingle siding and a steeply pitched, octagonal spire extends upward from the east end of the building. A round arch with hood molding spans the main entrance beneath this tower. Six windows with round arches pierce each of the side elevations, and are capped with stone hood moldings. They are composed of four-over-four lights, with fixed tracery above a transom bar. Stone quoins reinforce the four corners of the edifice, whose roof is covered with wooden shingles and pierced by a chimney toward the rear. Like the exterior, the interior remains virtually unaltered and still retains its original

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altar, gas-burning lamps, and oil-burning furnace. The pews feature handpainted wood graining, and the barrel-vault ceiling is faced by beaded boards. The cemetery, which is located immediately north of the structure, is an integral part of the church and is included within the district.

No. 41. Otto and Elene Swenson farm (c. 1870), contributing, photo no. 61. The one-and-a-half-story stone residence stands at the base of Rogstad Mountain, between the Olson-Arneson farm and the Pederson farm. A small, tree-lined creek runs immediately east of the house and flows north toward Meridian Creek. The plan of the house is rectangular. The western section of the house rises one-and-a-half stories in height, with a one-story "L" of a later construction date at the rear. The west end is similar in detailing and massing to the Johnson-Bertelson house (no. 37), and features an interior stone chimney that rises from the south gable end. A second-story loft extends from the opposite (north) gable end but remains open on the ground level. All original windows have been replaced with aluminum sash windows, and the limestone walls have been re-pointed with portland cement. Despite the alterations, the house maintains just enough of its historic character and integrity to be classified as contributing. Collapsed stone fences also can be found on the property.

No. 42. The Bersvend and Kari Swenson farm (early 1860s/c. 1900), contributing, photo nos. 62, 63, 64. The Bersvend and Kari Swenson farm is one of the most outstanding examples of a pioneer Norwegian farm complex in Bosque County. Prominently sited on the northside of Rogstad Mountain, it includes a stone and wood-frame residence, a stone barn, a detached dug-out cellar, collapsed stone fences, and the ruins of another stone outbuilding. The house is in poor condition and has been unoccupied since the 1950s. The oldest section of the house is of stone and was probably built in the early 1860s. The plan is asymmetrical, and is very similar to that of the Pierson house (no. 2). The stuccoed exterior veneer has begun to peel from the stone walls, exposing the ashlar limestone below. A single tie-rod provides structural support at the west end. The three-bay main facade, with its asymmetrical fenestration, faces south toward the mountains. Around the turn-of-the-century, the house was substantially remodeled and expanded. On the stone part of the home, the gable end of the west facade, with its exterior stone chimney, clearly shows that the pitch of the gable was made steeper to accommodate a new roof and dormers. A partially enclosed breezeway connects the stone house with the later, two-story, wood-frame addition which gives a T-shaped plan to the whole. A one-and-a-half-story stone barn, with a broken-pitch gabled roof, stands to the east of the main house. Just to the north is a barrel-vaulted cellar that has been dug into the side of the hill. Its entrance is capped with a fine segmental arch. The nearby water well, stone troughs, and the ruins of a frame outbuilding are associated with a light surface scatter of glass, ceramics, and metal tools.

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No. 43. A.O. and Olia Alfei farm (c. 1880), contributing, photo no. 65. The Old Alfei farm stands in a pasture just southeast of the Bersvend and Kari Swenson place. The Alfei house stands in ruins with no roof, and only a part of its stone walls remain intact. The original plan was rectangular, with a later one-room addition attached at the northeast corner. The house was built of rough-cut limestone, and retains much of its exterior stucco veneer as well as the plaster covering on the interior walls. The original fenestration is difficult to determine, but door openings are evident in the north and east walls. A hand-hewn wooden lintel still spans the north doorway. The west wall is the best preserved and reveals that the house once had a gable roof. Little of the interior remains intact, but some of the wooden ceiling beams and the hearth, with its segmentally arched fireplace, have survived. A one-room outbuilding of limestone construction is located to the west of the house, and a stone cistern has been found to the southeast. Despite the deteriorated condition of this site, it is important because its archeological potential appears to be strong. The entire area has remained undisturbed for decades and a rich surface scatter of potshards, fragments of wood, and other historical debris has been observed. For this reason, the Alfei Site has been deemed contributing.

No. 44. Peder and Trine Pederson farm (circa 1877), contributing, photo no. 66. The Pederson farm features the ruins of a log cabin and an adjacent, but separate, stone house. This log cabin, one of the few extant examples of a log structure within the entire Norwegian Settlement, rests upon a raised stone foundation. The hewn logs are finely crafted and have full-dovetail corner notching. Fenestration of the house is difficult to determine because of its present state of repair, but single openings pierce the north, south, and west walls. A one-room stone house was built about ten feet northeast of the log cabin, and it, too, stands in ruins. Although the entire roof is missing, some of the wooden beams still survive. The fenestration of the front follows an ABA rhythm, with a single doorway in the center. Large stone lintels span each of the openings. A small stone chimney rises from the gable end of the northeast wall. It was used as an outlet for a stove. Both the log cabin and stone house appear to have been joined at one time by a breezeway and porch. An early 20th-century frame house, with a square-shaped plan and hip roof, stands nearby. The concrete foundations of two other outbuildings still remain visible to the northwest of the log cabin, and numerous potshards and historical objects, such as hand-forged hinges, have been observed at the site.

No. 45. Ole J. Reiersen farm (1912), contributing, photo no. 67. The Ole J. Reiersen farm has one of the few purely frame residences within the district. Built in 1912, this two-story house is one of the last structures erected in Bosque County that follows the tradition of the asymmetrical-type frame house, such as the Colwick house

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(no. 22). It remains in good condition, with very few alterations. The plan of the house is T-shaped. A one-story porch, with turned wooden posts and decorative brackets, extends across the front facade. Double-hung windows with one-over-one lights pierce the clapboard-sided walls. The only major exterior alteration is a lean-to addition on the rear elevation. A board-and-batten barn also stands on this farm, as do several early 20th-century outbuildings.

No. 46. J. Lasson and Oline Reiersen farm (circa 1865), contributing, photo nos. 68, 69. The Reiersen house is situated at the base of Rogstad Mountain, just west of a small stream that flows toward Meridian Creek. Of limestone construction, it is another intact example of an early, pioneer Norwegian farmhouse. Its plan is rectangular in shape. The west facade exhibits a four-bay composition with two central doorways that open into separate rooms. The outer bays have wood sashes with six-over-six lights. A stone chimney is built onto the north wall. The two-bay east elevation has a shed-roof porch that extends the entire length of this facade. Although presently used as a barn, the structure retains its basic interior plan. A stone wall with a central door divides the interior space into equal rooms. An underground cistern and the remains of a dug-out cellar are located nearby, with a light surface scatter of household remains visible on the ground.

No. 47. Amund and Carlin Ilseng farm (circa 1877), contributing, photo no. 70. The Ilseng house, located near the east bank of a small stream that flows near the J. Lasson Reiersen house (no. 46), is one of only a handful of log-built residences that still stand within the area of the Norwegian settlement. Despite its present poor condition, the log house retains much of its integrity. This small house is crudely constructed. Unhewn logs with "V" corner notching can be seen on the east side of the house. The other walls, however, are covered with board-and-batten siding. A stone chimney rises from the west gable end, while a covered exterior stairway, which provides access to the loft, appears on the east side of the house. This stairway is important for it may be the only survivor of this kind of upstairs entranceway once common on early Norwegian homes. Of stone construction, the attached lean-to is an early addition. The ruins of a one-room stone structure are located about 25 feet south of the house.

No. 48. Salve and Caroline Knudson farm (circa 1875), contributing, photo no. 71. The Salve and Caroline Knudson house stands in a plowed field just south of the paved county road. Presently unoccupied, it is in fair condition and retains much of its integrity. This one-and-a-half-story residence is of the asymmetrical type of stone house, although later additions have slightly modified its original configuration. The south elevation, which originally served as the front, now has a partially enclosed porch that obscures the original fenestration. This wall, however, is pierced by a door and

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windows. The west elevation features an exterior chimney, while the opposite end has an interior chimney. One of the most distinctive elements of this structure appears on the north facade, where the long stone wall is interrupted by only one opening. A gabled porch, which was built before 1948, projects from the west end of this elevation, over the single door. Two mounds of quarried stone are located near a creekbed to the east of the house, and are assumed to represent razed outbuildings.

No. 49. Knud and Carmeal Knudson farm (c. 1875/c. 1900), contributing, photo no. 72. The Knud and Carmeal Knudson farm is easily visible by car from its location just south of the county road. It is presently unoccupied but remains in good condition. The one-and-a-half-story stone section is the oldest part of the residence, and its plan is of the asymmetrical type of stone house. A large stone chimney is built on the west wall, and double-hung windows with six-over-six lights flank either side of this chimney. High in the gable end, six-light casement windows appear on each side of the chimney. The north wall has two double-hung windows that are similar to those of the west end. Later frame additions to the east and south walls obscure the other openings of the original stone house. A single doorway opens onto a breezeway that connects the east wooden-frame addition to the stone block. This addition, which was probably built around the turn-of-the-century, exhibits a scale and fenestration similar to that of the original house and, therefore, is an important aspect of the structure's architectural evolution. A small stone building and two frame barn's also are located on the farm, and contribute to the historic character of the property.

Popejoy farm (c. 1940), non-contributing, no photo. Located between the Hans J. Hanson (no. 38) and the Olson-Arneson (no. 39) farms, this one-story, wood-frame house displays none of the characteristics which distinguish the contributing properties within the district.

Plattner farm (c. 1910), non-contributing, no photo. This farm is located on the L.H. Norderhoug tract of land between the Ilseng (no. 47) and the Salve Knudson (no. 48) farms. Although this frame structure is over fifty years old, it does not reflect those features that characterize the contributing structures. The ruins of a one-room stone structure, as well as the foundation of another building, are located on the property. A visit to these sites found several crockery shards and other historical artifacts, indicating that the property may have archeological potential. Because the archeological resources have not been evaluated, however, and because the wood-frame house visually dominates the property, the farm is classified as non-contributing at this time.

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Hanson (no. 38) houses, were built around 1870 and, therefore, do not represent the first group of settlers. This conclusion needs verification.

Continued settlement of the area was disrupted during the early 1860s, and the second wave of immigrants arrived in Bosque County after the Civil War. Several of the new immigrants decided to homestead in the Meridian Creek valley. A list of these families, the date each received their land patents (i.e., the date they had fulfilled the three-year homestead requirement), and the appropriate site number follow:

Otto and Elene Swenson	1871	41
Salve and Caroline Knudson	1871	48
Knud and Carmeal Knudson	1871	49
Andre and Engeborg Johnson	1875	37
A.O. and Olia Alfei	1877	43
Amund and Carlin Ilseng	1877	47
Peder and Trine Pederson	1877	44

Most of these families built easy-to-construct log cabins or dug-outs soon after their arrival to Bosque County, as was the common practice among all the Norwegian pioneers. Unfortunately, most of these temporary shelters have been destroyed. Yet two log cabins, one on the Ilseng farm (no. 47) and another in ruins on the Pederson farm (no. 44), have survived.

During the 1870s and 1880s, the upper Meridian Creek valley experienced a gradual transformation as it began to develop into the distinct rural community often referred to as the Upper Settlement. Its economy was based exclusively upon agriculture, and the farms, many of which had been started in the late 1860s and 1870s, proved to be quite productive. As prosperity increased, most of the pioneers replaced their early cabins with more substantial living quarters. Stone was the most common construction material used for these, and many of the extant houses, such as those on the Salve and Caroline Knudson (no. 48) farm, the Knud and Carmeal Knudson farm (no. 49), and the Otto and Elene Swenson farm (no. 41), were erected during that phase of settlement. Although pioneer life was obviously demanding, the Norwegians believed education to be important for their children. Thus as early as 1877, they had already constructed a schoolhouse on the Reiersen homestead.

In 1885, because of their distance from Our Savior's Church in Norse, the members of the Upper Settlement lobbied for their own edifice. Upon approval of this idea,

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Andreas Mikkelson was chosen to design and supervise construction of this new church, which was named St. Olaf's in honor of the patron saint of Norway. Although completed in the early 1890s and consecrated in 1895, it remained in active use only until 1917, when a new church was erected by the congregation in Cranfills Gap. St. Olaf's, however, has continued to be well maintained and is still occasionally used for services. Besides its obvious religious significance for the community, St. Olaf's is architecturally important. The quality and sophistication of its stone masonry, for instance, are unsurpassed within the entire settlement area, and its prominent siting makes it one of the most visible landmarks in the valley.

The Upper Settlement continued to develop during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Although no new farms were established, since all of the land within the valley had been claimed, new improvements on several of the farms took place. Christen and Johanne Hansen purchased land on the William Smith survey in 1875 and erected a one-and-a-half-story frame house (no. 36) about 1893. The following year Bertel Bertelsen bought the old Johnson farm and built a frame addition onto its original stone house (no. 37). Around 1900, B.B. Swenson, son of Bersvend and Kari Swenson, likewise added a frame addition onto their old house (no. 42). In 1912, Ole J. Reiersen, with the help of carpenter Ole Anderson, built a two-story frame house (no. 45) near the Lasson Reiersen homestead. This frame residence was one of the last structures built of the late pioneer era of the Norwegian Settlement. Later houses, such as those on the Pederson farm (no. 44) and the Norderhouse farm, reflect the tastes of main-stream Anglo-American culture and stand as testimony to the assimilation of the Norwegians into the surrounding society.

Few changes have taken place within the Upper Settlement since the early 1900s. Farms within the district have remained active throughout most of this century although, in recent years, several of the farmhouses have been abandoned and the land converted into a pasture for cattle. Most of these farms, however, are still owned by descendants of the original settlers, and virtually no new construction, with the exception of the recent remodeling of the Johnson-Bertelsen and Otto Swenson farms, has taken place within the bounds of the district.

Justification of Boundaries

Information from three sources was used to determine the areal extent of the district. These include (1) the density of the sites as identified through fieldwork, (2) the physical environment and how it affected the development of the district, and (3) the documentary history for the Upper Settlement as a distinct community within the Norwegian area of Bosque County.

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The idea of establishing a rural historic district came from the data obtained through fieldwork. Although a large number of Norwegian structures had been identified throughout the entire settlement area, a particularly high concentration of sites was recorded in the region located along the south bank of the upper Meridian Creek valley, just east of Cranfills Gap. This same area also contained few modern buildings and, to a large extent, retained a very strong sense of the past. Most of the historic resources identified there exhibited design characteristics, materials, and workmanship typical of the vernacular architecture in the Norwegian Settlement. A follow-up survey of the Upper Settlement area identified and recorded all structures and land-use patterns in the potential district.

A second major consideration for the creation of this district was the area's physical environment, for geographical and topographical features clearly distinguished this area from adjacent territory and contribute to its sense of cohesiveness. Set along the south side of the upper Meridian Creek valley, the district is bounded on the north by an unnamed county road and to the south by the Jenson and Rogstad mountains. The county road, which connects FM 182 and State Highway 22, generally follows the path of Meridian Creek. Although the land between the creek and the road has retained its rural character, it contains no significant historic resources associated with the Norwegian Settlement, with the exception of Old St. Olaf's Church. The southern boundary is dependent on the Jenson and Rogstad mountains, and follows the 1000-ft. contour line of the 1979 U.S.G.S. maps. This topographical boundary provides a logical means for delineating the district, and also reflects the role played by these hills in originally defining the area of settlement and in shaping its development. When the U.S.G.S. maps were overlaid with state land-grant maps, it was found that the land claimed by Norwegians between 1860 and 1880 conformed to the foregoing topographical considerations remarkably well.

Sixteen structures remained within the boundaries, 14 of which contribute to the historic character of the district. These 14 structures also represent a cross-section of the 19th-century Norwegian settlement as a whole, and preserve a strong sense of the original close physical and cultural relationships which the farms had to one another. Traveling through this area of Bosque County is almost like taking a step back to another era.

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Significance

With Old St. Olaf's Lutheran Church as its focal point, the Upper Settlement Rural Historic District encompasses approximately 2900 acres of land and includes a cohesive grouping of middle to late 19th-century Norwegian farmsteads that are concentrated along the south side of the upper Meridian Creek valley. The boundaries outline an elongated area that extends from a point about one mile east of Cranfills Gap to the eastern border of the Knud Knudson land patent, a distance of about four miles. Because the creek and hills of the valley physically isolate this area from adjacent territory, the upper settlement region has developed somewhat independently from other parts of the Norwegian community. To a remarkable degree, this area retains its 19th-century, rural sense of time and place, and relatively few intrusive elements detract from its historic character. Since virtually every type of farmhouse built by the Norwegian immigrants can be seen within the Upper Settlement, the district represents a textbook history of this distinctive vernacular architecture. The district also contains a number of ruins that, because of their abandonment many years ago and their relatively undisturbed nature, possess archeological potential.

Little is known of the early (pre-1865) history of the Upper Settlement, but one of the first Norwegian families known to have homesteaded in the upper Meridian Creek valley were Bersvend and Kari Swenson. After arriving in Bosque County in 1857, the Swensons applied for a 160-acre land grant from the state in 1860, and established their farm on the north side of Rogstad Mountain just beneath the Berger and Martha Rogstad place. Here they erected a one-and-a-half-story stone house (no. 42) that was sited on a bluff overlooking the valley. Information from the General Land Office and the 1860 Census would seem to indicate that the Swensons erected this house during the early 1860s. This structure, which was substantially remodeled around 1900, is one of the oldest surviving residences in the entire Norwegian settlement area.

J. Lasson and Oline Reierson were another of the early families to settle in the upper Meridian Creek valley. They came to Bosque County in 1860 and, like the Swensons, applied for a 160-acre land grant that year. The Reiersons selected land adjacent to, but down the mountain from, the Swenson farm, where they erected a one-story stone house (no. 46) near a small stream which flows north toward Meridian Creek.

General Land Office records reveal that Canute Olson and E.R. Skeinland (or Skimland) also received patents for land within the valley in the early 1860s. The history of both of these properties, their owners, and of the stone house that presently stands on each of these parcels of land is at best sketchy. Research suggests that the structures, referred to herein as the Olson-Arneson (no. 39) and Hans J. and Petra

UPPER SETTLEMENT RURAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

