

# SØMNA

English guidance

# Preface

It was almost 40 years ago that I began to learn about my ancestors from Sømna (Bjørn 1:10). It was incredible luck that I met Tor Mathisen, who was just beginning to work on the bygdebok. When he suggested I work with him and do the genealogy for the books, I could not understand how I, who was just doing this as a hobby and didn't even speak Norwegian, could do such a thing. What I thought would be a three-year project became all-consuming, long term and life changing. Much has happened in our lives, and here we are, still thinking and working on the people of Sømna.

I wanted to re-do Sømna slekt because I have found so many changes and additions over the years. We have learned a lot since we started, and today so many more sources are available. With the Internet, we can communicate quickly, and also have sources such as Digitalarkivet. With this website we have original church records for all Norway right at our fingertips. With Ancestry and other sites, it is possible to follow those who emigrated so much easier.

We have also written the bygdebøker for Brønnøy, and I have worked a lot with Velfjord. I had time to hunt through church records from places as far away as Bergen, Trondheim and Stavanger, and of course all Nordland. The more I worked with other places, the more I found for Sømna. We have also had time to get feedback and additions from people who were using the original books.



May 17. 2013. Margaret Miller, Tor Mathisen (right) and the mayor of Brønnøy, Paul Birger Torgnes. (Foto: Brønnøysunds Avis).

For this Sømna project, I am extremely grateful to the community for their interest in this project, to Tor Mathisen for his long-term friendship, continued support and direction, to Jon Holand for his patience and ability to put the work into book form, and to our faithful friend, Odd Hendry Hestås, for coming back after working on the first Sømna books to proof read and offer so much good advice. These are the best co-workers ever!

We have spent countless hours to try to bring you the best possible look at the people of Sømna from the years 1650 to the early 1900's. I wish we could have carried the project further into the 1900, but that is left for someone else.

I have ancestors from five other places in Norway, so what is it about Sømna that draws me in so tightly? I have never lived there and still don't speak the language well. Is it possible that my spirit holds a memory of this place?

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## The Norwegian Naming System

No study of your Norwegian ancestors can be undertaken without an understanding of their naming system which was used up to around 1900. Many are confused by this system, but it is really very simple and extremely useful. In old rural Norway each person had a name with three parts: The given name, the patronymic or father name, and the farm name. Take, for example, the names Bård Arntsen Bordvika and Marit Olsdatter Enge (see Enge A:7). Here, Bård and Marit are given names, Arntsen and Olsdatter are patronymics or father names, and Bordvika and Enge are farm names.

In Norway a relatively few given names were commonly used, and there was a strong tendency for families to pass certain names down from one generation to another in a definite pattern. This pattern was not followed as strictly in Sømna as in other parts of Norway, but it was generally used up until around 1810. Almost always the first two sons and first two daughters were named for their grandparents. For example, Bård Arntsen and Marit Olsdtr. named their first two sons Arnt and Ole, and two of the daughters were named Marit after Bård's mother and Kirsti after Marit's mother. There were exceptions to this rule. If either parent had a previous husband or wife who had died, then their name took precedence. Or perhaps one of the parents had a brother or sister who had recently died leaving no children. Then they might use this name first. If a child died, very often the next child of the same sex was given that same name. Occasionally, there were two living children in the same family with the same name. The important thing is to notice the pattern. These names are clues and can be used to find a child's grandparents.

The patronymic name indicates the name of one's father. It is formed by adding the suffix "-sen" (son) or "-datter" (daughter) to the name of the father. Thus, Bård Arntsen, or Bård, son of Arnt; and Marit Olsdatter, or Marit, daughter of Ole.

The farm name identifies the farm on which a person lived. As long as, and only as long as a person lived on any given farm, he took the name of that farm. His farm name changed if he moved to a different farm. Thus, when Bård Arntsen Bordvika married and moved to Enge, his name became Bård Arntsen Enge. You can therefore see that three brothers could have three different farm names, and that if more than one family lived on a farm, they would use the same farm name, but would not necessarily be related to each other. This farm name system was used in Norway up until around 1900.

When the Norwegian immigrants came to America, they encountered a naming system quite different from that which they had used in Norway. They complied with this system in different ways. Some chose their old farm name, perhaps shortening it, Americanizing the spelling, or even translating it. Most, feeling that it was not proper to use the name of the home farm when they no longer lived there, decided to use the patronymics as the family name. This is why there are so many Johnsons, Larsons, Olsons, etc. The spelling of the name could have been changed several times, or perhaps after some years of using a name like Olson, a family would decide to go back to a less common farm name. A few chose a new American name, but most immigrants chose a name which was meaningful to them.

Probates as a source:

You will find a button for downloading a PDF file called *Sømna skifter*. Skifter are probates. Here you can find the farm and number for families who had probates that pertained to them. These probates often name the spouses and children of the deceased person. If one of the children was dead and left children, then these children were named.

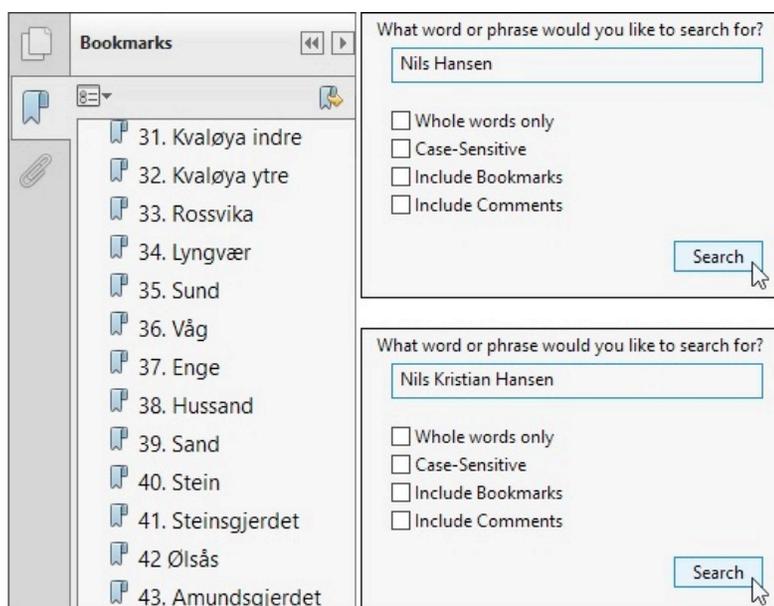
To find the original probate, you can go to the website *Digitalarkivet.no*. There are often indexes in the probate books. You may not be able to read the probate, but it is not hard to pick out names and relationships.

Svein Edvardsen has typed up the relationships for probates for Helgeland. This is being handled by *Slekt og Data Salten*, the Nordland branch of the *Slekt og Data* society. You can buy *Skifter på Helgeland* as a searchable CD or USB stick. If you want more information, please contact: [kildereg.skifte@sa.slektogdata.no](mailto:kildereg.skifte@sa.slektogdata.no)

## Searching with Adobe Reader

The new and updated family history for Sømna is being presented as a PDF file on the Sømna bygdebok web page. This means everyone can get to know the family history by downloading the PDF file from the Internet. Then just open the file in a PDF reader – shown here with Adobe Reader.

Most web browsers can open and display PDF files. But how to use it may vary between web browsers, and will also depend on settings in the web browser. The easiest will therefore be downloading the file. And doing it this way you can use the file without accessing the Internet.



The index on page 8 in the file gives reference to the 73 farms covered in the family history, which are presented in Sømna bygdebok vol. I-IV. You can use the file like an ordinary book – just find the starting page for a particular farm, then move to that page to see which families are included at a certain part (called *bruk* in Norwegian).

Note that bookmarks to the farms have been included. You open this menu by clicking the

bookmark icon as shown to the left. Then just click on the actual farm in order to jump to the starting page for that farm in the text.

*Use of the genealogy section* explains how to follow a person backwards or forwards in time. Note that this reference system also covers the farms in Brønnøy bygdebok vol. I-V.

The real advantage is, however, the possibility to search through the whole family history. Here we explain how to use the most common PDF reader Adobe Reader (free software).

Double-click the downloaded PDF file to open it. If the top left corner of the PDF reader shows *Adobe Reader*, then you can perform searches this way:

\* open the *Edit* menu and choose *Advanced Search*

This will now open a new window in addition to the file. Here you enter the search criteria – note that it will have to match exactly in order to get a hit. This means i.e. a search for *first name last name* will not include those with a middle name in addition (see example in the graphics).

You can check the matches in the hit list the following way:

- \* forget the hits where the text shown indicates they are not what you are looking for
- \* click on the other hits one by one and check in the file what this applies to

With a little practice it should be quite easy to do searches in the family history. Although the hit list may be long, it is after all easier checking this instead of reading hundreds of pages with text.

Final tip: States in the USA are referenced using the two letter abbreviation. When searching for a state, i.e. MO, make sure to select both *Whole words only* and *Case-Sensitive* (see the graphics). This will avoid getting hits in names of persons, farms, and places too.

## Use of the genealogy section

Sømna Slekt I-IV follows around 2400 families from as far back as we can go to 1900, and a bit beyond for those married before 1901. The genealogy is organized by farms, and since the lease or deed was usually in the man's name, the families are organized after him. The same for *husmenn* (cotters), *innerster* (those who live with a family) and *andre* (others).

In order for the genealogy not to take too much space, abbreviations have been used:

f. = born d. = died g. = married ug. = unmarried konf. = confirmed dtr. = daughter  
enkemann = widower gbr. = gårdbruker or farm owner hsm. = husmann (cotter) dødf. =  
stillborn (boy or girl) forp. = lessee or tenant

PM 1755 = minister's census from 1755

folketell. = census publ. abs. = public confession KB = church book

introd. = introduced (a mother was introduced back into the church after the birth of a child). When "kona introd." is seen in the genealogy, this introduction is all we see in the church book. No baptism was recorded.

Abbreviations have been used for some of the churches. Trondheim: (Dk) = Domkirken, (VF) = Vår Frue, (Bl) = Bakklandet and (Lm) = Lademoen. Bergen: (Dk) = Domkirken. For Kristiania and Oslo, Oslo's Domkirken is called Vår Frelsers kirke until 1950.

Neighboring communities are written as: Brø. = Brønnøy, Velf. = Velfjorden and Bi. = Bindalen (includes both Vassås and Solstad parishes). County names are not added for places in Nordland, but now and then names of larger areas are used, such as Salten, Lofoten, etc. The following counties have been abbreviated: F = Finnmark, T = Troms, NT = Nord-Trøndelag, ST = Sør-Trøndelag, MR = Møre og Romsdal, SF = Sogn og Fjordane, HO = Hordaland, RO = Rogaland, VA = Vest-Agder, AA = Aust-Agder, TE = Telemark, BU = Buskerud, VE = Vestfold, ØF = Østfold, AK = Akershus, HE = Hedmark and OP = Oppland.

Abbreviations for states in the USA:

AL = Alabama, AK = Alaska, AR = Arkansas, AZ = Arizona, CA = California, CO = Colorado, CT = Connecticut, DE = Delaware, FL = Florida, GA = Georgia, HI = Hawaii, IA = Iowa, ID = Idaho, IL = Illinois, IN = Indiana, KS = Kansas, KY = Kentucky, LA = Louisiana, MA = Massachusetts, MD = Maryland, ME = Maine, MI = Michigan, MN = Minnesota, MS = Mississippi, MO = Missouri, MT = Montana, NC = North Carolina, ND = North Dakota, NE = Nebraska, NH = New Hampshire, NJ = New Jersey, NM = New Mexico, NV = Nevada, NY = New York, OH = Ohio, OK = Oklahoma, OR = Oregon, PA = Pennsylvania, RI = Rhode Island, SC = South Carolina, SD = South Dakota, TN = Tennessee, TX = Texas, UT = Utah, VA = Virginia, VT = Vermont, WA = Washington, WI = Wisconsin, WV = West Virginia, WY = Wyoming

An example of the genealogy: See page 24 under farm number 6 Brennmarka:

**1:18** (ca. 1841–1855) **Hallstein Kristoffersen** Teisdalen A:7f f. 1802 d. 1855 omkom i snøskred g. 1828 **Anne Pernille Larsdtr.** Holand h/i:6d f. 1790 d. 1836 på Olderbakken g. II 1840 Velf., **Sirianna Pedersdtr.** f. 1799 d. 1882 på Hongset, datter av gbr. Peder Bårdsen og Andrea Nilsdtr. Asplia Velf. Sirianna var søster til Dønnes Pedersen Storlia 1:14, og halvsøster til Doret Pedersdtr. Tomaslia store 1:8. Hallstein var i tillegg bruker, se Olderbakken 1:13. Hallstein hadde to barn før han ble gift:

- a. Anne Oline f. 1820 Aunet d. 1820 20 uker. Mor var Elen Johannesdtr. Aunet, 21 år.
- b. Kristine Helene f. 1824 Aunet d. 1829 på Aunet. Mor var Elen Jensdtr. (Skånvika h/i:2a?)

Felles barn Hallstein og Anne Pernille:

- Ic. Pernille Marie f. 1829 Jøllmoen (Grønmo) d. 1829 1 dag

Felles barn Hallstein og Sirianna:

- IId. Kristian f. 1841 Hongset d. 1841 samme dag
- e. Peternille Alette Birgitte f. 1843 Brennmarka d. 1925. Se Hongset øvre 3:16

Here we find Hallstein Kristoffersen and his family:

*1:18* means that he is at bruk (part) 1 and “head” of the 18th family on this part.

(ca. 1841–1855) gives the time period Hallstein was user of Brennmarka. *Hallstein var i tillegg bruker; se Olderbakken 1:13* means that Hallstein was also a time at Olderbakken and can be seen there.

*Teisdalen A:7f* tells that Hallstein is from farm Teisdalen and farm part A, and that he was the sixth child in the seventh family (see page 62).

Hallstein was married two times (marked with g. and g. II) and his second wife, Sirianna Pedersdtr., was not from Sømna. In such cases where the wife or husband is not from Sømna, the names of the parents are given if known. We have also given the siblings and half siblings for those who are placed in Sømna.

When a man was married several times, the first child from each marriage is given a Roman numeral (I, II, etc.) and begins with *Felles barn* (children of...). This is to show to which marriage the children belong. If the man was married only once, no Roman numeral is used. Besides the children born inside the marriage, we can also find children born outside the marriage. This can be a child the man had before he married or one he had while he was married. In these cases, it is made clear who the mother was.

There are also cases where the wife had children with other men, sometimes from an earlier marriage in another parish. These children, who are not the children of the present husband, are numbered aa, bb, etc. in order to avoid confusion. If we look at the five children Hallstein fathered, we see they are arranged by birth year with a, b, c, etc. Children a and b

were illegitimate, and therefore the mothers' names are given. Child c is marked with Ic and begins with *Felles barn...* to show this is the first child in the first marriage. Similarly for child d, who is marked IId. Child e becomes then the second child in the second marriage.

In the same way that we follow Hallstein back to his parents, we can follow his children forward in time. Of these five children, only Peternille (e) grew up, and here is written, "Se Hongset øvre 3:16". This means that Peternille and her family can be found on this farm (see page 40).

If no farm name is given after the birth year, the child was born on the farm where the family has its main place. Before 1820, the birth year can be a bit vague, since all births were registered in the church book according to the *baptismal date*, not the birth date. We have chosen to use years and have not used exact dates.

If there is nothing written after the year of death, the person concerned either died on the farm or outside the community where he or she lived. Especially during the 1900's, some people can certainly have lived more places than we could manage to list.

Families in the Ursfjord area, and especially in the Hongset area, have up through time often handled their church business in Velfjorden. From farm 1 to and including farm 21, we therefore have not specified whether the information came from the Sømna (Vik) or Velfjorden church records.

## **DICTIONARY - ORDFORKLARING FOR ENGELSKSPRÅKLIGE**

*Gårdbruker* or farmer was the person who had the farm. If he was called "leilending" or "bygselmann" he did not own it, but paid rent to the owner. A farmer became "sjøleier" when he bought the farm and received a deed.

*Husmann* or cotter was a step below the farmer. In Sømna he was called "plassmann". They were usually given a small amount of land on which they had their houses, could farm a bit and had a few animals. This group often had to turn to fishery to survive. Many in this class were very mobile, roaming from farm to farm within a span of only a few years.

*Strandsitter* or a shore dweller paid rent to have just enough land for a house, but did not farm. Fishing was their livelihood.

*Innerst* was one who rented a part, in most cases, of the farmer's house. He was often a newly married son or daughter of the farmer. They had their own household and sometimes their own animals. Their income came mostly from fishing.

*Tjenere* were servants.

*Kårfolk* usually were retired farmers. They lived on the farm they had had and got support from the "new people".

*Legdslemmer* were poor people who were unable to work. They were usually old and moved from farm to farm where they got support.