

Halvorsen Family Roots in Norway

By Ruby Halvorsen Roosenberg



Halvor Jorgensen (1819-1900) and Gunhild Marie Jensdatter (1829-1915) had 17 children.

Halvor Jorgensen (b. Dec. 22, 1819 in Drangedal or Torredal, Norway; d. 1900) was the son of Jorgen Jorgensen Moen and Asgier Lejulsdatter Boem. His wife Gunhild Marie Jensdatter (b. March 15, 1829 in Drangedal; d. 1915) was the daughter of Jens Pedersen and Maria Barnsdatter. They were married on March 12, 1848, and lived in southeastern Norway on the Island of Baeroy (Bear Island) near Kragero. The land was divided into two sections – eastern Lindtvedt and western Lindtvedt. Their residence was built in 1870 or 1871 on the eastern farm.

They had a total of 17 born-alive children: Nils, Ingeborg, Jens, Maren, Lauritz, Elevine, Halvor, Jorgine, Elise, Hanna and Jorgen. Six others died while they were small.

Son Lauritz Halvorsen is considered to have been the owner of the eastern farm, since he had the right to sell it in 1899 to his brother, Jorgen Halvorsen (1874-1938), with certain responsibilities for looking after their parents for the rest of their lives. Jorgen built a new barn/cowshed and brewing house. Lauritz left for America.

Jorgen married Laura Thorbjornsen (1875-1941) who was born in Kragero. Their children were Gunhild, Olaf, Harold, Hanna, Margit and Ingeborg. Olaf (b. 1902) took over the property in 1938. His wife, Gunhild (b. 1908), was born in Drangedal. They had no children.

Halvor gave the smaller western Lindtvedt farm to his son Jens in 1879. Born on December 3, 1852, Jens and his wife, Johanne Amalia Bjorguften, born September 8 or 9, 1856, in Kragero, were married on Skatoy on November 8, 1881. She was the daughter of Johannes Collitz Bjorguften (b. Dec. 3, 1820, in Moland, Norway; d. April 1894) and Thale Kristine Gundersdatter (born in Solum, Norway; d. May 5, 1875, at 54 years, in Kragero). As a child, Amalia liked to picnic on the other Islands and get clabbered or thick sugared milk. That was a special treat. Her father was a carpenter and they rode on ferries to other Islands that were family farms.

Jens and Amalia built a living house, at approximately the same size as the house on the Lindtvedt eastern farm, and a smaller cowshed. The living house was later renovated and enlarged by O.H. Laugrad in 1918.

Recollections by Jens' son, Hart Halvorsen

Jens Halvorsen left home when he was 16 years old because his father drank too much and he was tired of the poor family life. He eventually got a job on a ship sailing from Norway to Boston in the USA. While the ship was anchored in Boston he would go to night school to learn all he could. He became 1st Mate with a cabin of his own and was hoping some day to be a captain.

One day while boarding the ship to go back to Norway, he received some Seventh Day Adventist literature that completely changed his life. Before he got off ship, he quit smoking and threw his pipe into the ocean. When his wife heard about it she was angry. The pipe had been her gift to him.

Jens was baptized as a Seventh Day Adventist through a hole in the ice. His wife was baptized later. Not long after they were baptized, because of religious persecution, they moved to the United States.



They lived there for some years and continued the clearing and cultivating that Jens' father had started, as well as planting fruit trees and berry bushes. After Jens and Amalia were married, Jens went sailing as a ship carpenter and on one of these trips he bought a tract on the 7th day Sabbath and as a result they joined the church and decided that they should go to America where they could have more religious freedom. On July 22, 1887, they sailed on the ship Rollo, bound for Chicago with one-year-old son Martin (b. June 9, 1886).

While living in Chicago, they had three more children: Thallie Christina (b. Nov. 7, 1888), Harturg Johannes (b. Nov. 24, 1890), and George (b. Sept. 19, 1893). Amalia said that when she turned on the faucet to get water while living in Chicago, she would sometimes get minnows!

Jens had some siblings who came to America, but we do not know when, including sisters Elevine and Elise. Some worked for the Pullman Car Company.

Amalia had two brothers who lived in Chicago. Johan Christian Borgesens (Bjorgufsen) (b. Nov. 4, 1848 in Solum) married Elsa Nielsen and had four children—Lillian, Mary, Elsie and Amy. Bendix George Bjorgufsen (b. May 10, 1844 in Skien), known as Ben, married Laura Stiansen in 1875. Their daughter was Thora (b. Aug. 24, 1878 in Kragero, Norway). Bendix and Laura immigrated to the US in 1879. Their second daughter was Edna Ingeborg (b. Nov. 4, 1884, in Chicago). Sometime after Edna's birth and before the 1900 census, Bendix and his family moved to a farm in Knox Indiana. The children of Ben and Laura knew Amalia as Aunt Molley.

Amalia's other siblings were: Hans Andreas (b. Oct. 22, 1851), Sophia Agatha (b. Feb. 26, 1859), Thales (b. April 26, 1862) and Karen Andrea (b. Jan. 3, 1865).

About 1895 Jens and Amalia moved their family to Cove Lake, near Grand Haven, Michigan, where their fifth child Daniel was born (Feb. 26, 1897). Here Jens built another house on a lake where the setting was like their homeland in Norway. They had a large garden and some farmland. Dan remembers the family sitting around the table shelling dry beans to sell.



Johanne Amalia Bjorgufson Halvorsen (b. 1856, m. 1881, d. 1941) affectionately known as Bestemor (grandmother).

After Jens Halvorsen died from a construction accident in Saugatuck, Michigan, on June 29, 1907, Amalia took her sons George and Dan to Chicago to visit her brother Christian in Chicago. Dan remembered taking a passenger boat ride from Grand Haven to Chicago to visit his uncle. They also went to visit her brother Ben on the farm in Indiana. The boys helped on the farm, as well as on the ice route.



Halvorsen home near Grand Haven, c. 1908
Dan Hart Amalia George Thallie

Then they went back to Grand Haven, harvested some fruit, sold the farm, and moved to Berrien Springs, Michigan, so Amalia could send her boys to a Christian school. They lived in several school-owned houses. In one house, they had several boxes of matches on a closet shelf that fell to the floor and caught fire. That caused some excitement! They built a house on US 31 which they sold, later using the money for school and other expenses. They rented until Dan was married. Then Amalia went to California to live with her daughter Thallie, her husband Claude Curtis and their children Claud, James, Christina Rose, Ruth, Adell, Raymond, Albert, Donald, Marigold, Ann and Barbara.

Sometimes Amalia would visit her sons a few months at a time. Martin had a farm in Dowagiac, Michigan, with his wife Flossie (Hall) and their children George Hall, Lucille and Ida. Hart was called to serve his country in World War I, but went no further than Battle Creek. He became a teacher in Michigan where he lived with his wife Beatrice (Murphy) and their children Forest and Betty Jane. George also spent time at the Battle Creek base. With his wife Shirlie (Schoonard) and their children Geraldine, George Donavon, Virginia, and Edward (Ned), he later lived in Berrien Springs, Michigan, and was a missionary in China. Dan and his wife Lucile (Ford) lived in Washington, D.C., and Berrien Springs with their children Ruby, Lester and Thelma, making his living as a carpenter.

Recollection by Thallie's daughters, Christina Rose Jerner and Adell Joanna Cochran

We remember Bestemor for baking bread for our large family. She also made and sold items door to door, including potholders and a doorstep. The doorstep was made with empty Crisco cans salvaged from trashcans by her grandchildren. Dad would set a doll in cement in the can and attach a wire handle. When the cement hardened, Bestemor would dress the doll in bright oilcloth. Because she didn't speak English, Bestemor was accompanied on her sales trips by a reluctant grandchild who was later rewarded with a treat purchased with some proceeds. We all liked that!



Naomi Marvin (friend) Hart Beatrice Shirlie George Dan
 Hall Lucille Christina Amalia Thallie Claude Ruth
 Rose Claud Carol

c. 1919



About 1939, the three brothers went to California to visit their mother and sister. On July 6, 1941, Bestemor died. She is buried at Grand View Cemetery in Glendale, California. A few years later early July was selected as the time for the annual Halvorsen reunion in Michigan.

I hope that this story inspires others to share their family stories and pictures.

Notes:

- ✍ Some information about the family in Norway is from a bygdebok, a local history book, **Sannidal Og Skatoy**, vol. 2, especially pages 747-748. It is available at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. Sannidal is a municipality near Kragero and Skatoy is the largest island near Kragero.
- ✍ Amalia's family name was spelled Bjorgulfesen in research by the Norwegian American Genealogical Center in Madison, Wisconsin, although her father's funeral program did not include the L. Later family members used Borgesen.
- ✍ The ship Rollo transported passengers to England. We don't know the ship that took the Halvorsens to the US or their port of entry.