

Bjerkreim Reunion

by Gary T. Johnson

Dedicated to Reidar and Oddbjørg Alice Efteland

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Figure 1 Believed to be portrait of Svale Ståleson Hytland, also known in Chicago by the Americanized names of Samuel Larson and Samuel Lawson. Original in possession of Reidar Efteland, Klepp, Norway. Given to him by Lovise Luthersdtr. Hytland, who was Svale's grand-niece.

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On August 17, 2000, at a farm known as “Hyotland” in the mountainous township of Bjerkreim in the county of Rogaland, Norway, a family from the near-by town of Klepp and a family from Evanston, Illinois, stood together on an old dirt road. Until that day, they had never met, but they shared a common bond. In 1853, in that same place, Svale Ståleson Hyotland had said goodbye to his older brother, Sigbjørn, and headed down the country road that led away from Hyotland to a new life in Chicago. He left the port of Stavanger on about March 16, 1853.

As far as we know, Svale never came back to Hyotland and none of his many descendants ever returned until that day when Svale’s great-greatgrandson, Gary Johnson, and his wife Susan, and two of their children, Timothy and Anna, stood at Hyotland with Sigbjørn’s greatgrandson, Reidar Efteland, and his wife, Oddbjørg Alice.

It was a letter that brought them together. Gary had an interest in family history and in 1991 his first effort had been to discover the background of one of his most unknown family branches, that of Svale Ståleson. He put a short book together for the family in the U.S. that traced Svale back to Hyotland Farm #2 in Bjerkreim. Svale was known by various names in Chicago as he Americanized Svale to “Samuel” and Ståleson to “Larson” or “Lawson.” “Larson” probably came from the fact that his father had been Ståle Larsson, and many Norwegians who came to the U.S. took on the American custom of having the same last name as their fathers, rather than constructing a last name from their father’s first name in the old Norwegian style. “Lawson” was the last name that he gave all his children, and that had a good ring to it in Chicago, where a prominent Norwegian family had changed its name to Lawson. “Lawson” also was a play on the last part of Svale’s original last name — Ståleson. In fact, it was in a family tree put together in about 1960 by Svale’s great-grandson and namesake, Lawson C. Lunde, that Svale’s original Norwegian last name was recorded as “Svale Larson (or Stollawson)” and these various names were linked.¹

Gary put the book aside and turned to other branches of his family, but in 1999 he noticed that two books of a three-volume project had appeared about the people who had lived over the centuries in the township of Bjerkreim.² Towns in Norway are producing local histories, “bygdeboker,” based on a wealth of information — church and land records, probate papers, judicial orders and the photographs and papers kept by families. He borrowed these books from the Vesterheim Genealogical Center in Madison, Wisconsin, and found this tantalizing reference to Svale Ståleson:

“Svale born 2 January 1823. To USA (attested date 16 March 1853). Lived in Chicago. Reidar Efteland from Klepp has a letter from 1859 which Svale sent from Chicago to his brother, Sigbjørn, at home in Hytland. It describes people from Bjerkreim who lived in Chicago, among others several siblings from Austrumdal farm.”³

Who was Reidar Efteland? In all likelihood a relative and one with a passion for family history. Otherwise, why would he have kept this old letter? Reidar Efteland. A quick search on the Internet yielded a clue almost immediately. First, a webpage from a young man living near Stavanger named Frode Efteland gave the e-mail addresses of the people in his life, including his father, Reidar Efteland. Gary sent Reidar an e-mail from his law office on October 19, 1999, asking about the letter and suggesting that they might be related. He had a reply the very next day, confirming that Reidar indeed was Sigbjørn’s descendant. The two branches of the family were back in contact. A few days later, Gary received another e-mail, this time with an attachment. It was a photographic copy of Svale’s letter back to Sigbjørn at the Hytland farm. His letter had come full circle back to Chicago 140 years later.

The letter is faded with age and in a local dialect from before the time that Norwegian settled into its two main standard versions. (See translation in Appendix.) It was an “America letter,” a letter written from a Norwegian immigrant to the family back home describing life in the Vesterheim — the Western Home. It described life in Chicago, a city with such wonders as water pipes. The letter contained a decisive statement: Svale had decided not to return to Norway. Why? Among other things, there were no civil wars. Remember, this was in 1859! And how could he have known that he and his pregnant wife, Bertine, would witness the destruction of their adopted city in the Great Chicago Fire of October 8, 1871? The letter conceded that there were swindlers in Chicago, but weren’t there swindlers everywhere? In any event, Svale had built a house and he was going to settle down.

The family in Norway had kept the America letter, but no later information remained about Svale and his life in Chicago. If he had written again, nobody living knew about it. The family in Norway today did not even know if Svale had married, let alone if he had been a father. It must have been very startling to hear from one of Svale’s great-greatgrandchildren and to learn that he had many other descendants, as well.

What was the rest of the story? By the time of the U.S. census of 1860, Svale was married to Bertine Borreson, also from Norway, but we don’t yet know exactly where.⁴ They eventually had six children, including Minnie Marie Lawson,⁵ great-grandmother of Gary and his generation, and three others who lived to adulthood.⁶ The family tree prepared in about 1960 by Lawson Lunde identified 49 direct descendants of Svale and Bertine. (Forty years later there are many more, but — sorry to say — the details are not complete. The family in America has spread far and wide.) Svale worked in trades such as cooper and shinglemaker and owned a house at 1116 West Grand Avenue.⁷ Svale died on January 22, 1901 in Chicago, and Bertine died on March 22, 1913 in suburban Park Ridge. That’s the rest of the story.

Something else: Reidar also had what he believed to be a picture of Svale, and that, too, was dispatched as an e-mail attachment and printed out in Chicago. This also was extraordinary. The family in Chicago did not have a picture of this rather elusive forbear, but the Norwegian family did! It was given to Reidar by Lovise Luthersdtr. Hytland, who had lived in Bjerkreim and had been a link to Bjerkreim's past.⁸ Reidar had interviewed her in her old age and had driven over the roads of the township with her, recording her memories. She thought that this was a picture of her greatuncle, Svale, probably sent back to Bjerkreim from Chicago.

August 17, 2000, was a busy day for the families of Svale and Sigbjørn. Bleary from their trip from Chicago, the Johnson family had a hearty Norwegian breakfast at their hotel in Stavanger and awaited the arrival of Reidar and Oddbjørg. The Norwegians arrived in two cars, and the first stop was the medieval monastery of Utstein Kloster, on Klosterøy Island in Stavanger Harbor. This was not only a tourist destination, but the site of the farm where the Kloster family, another branch of Gary's family, had taken its name. (Ingeborg Kloster,⁹ another original immigrant to Chicago, had married Ola (Ole) Olsson Anda,¹⁰ and it was their son, Olaf Mandius Anda,¹¹ who married Svale's daughter, Minnie Marie Lawson.¹²) The Kloster ancestors had worked as tenant farmers and probably had little contact with the gracious living quarters in the old monastery where the actual owners of the farm lived. The Kloster farm remains one of the largest farms in Norway. After touring Utstein Kloster, the families visited the neighboring islands of Mosterøy and Rennesøy, where the female line of the Kloster family had originated.¹³ Then, back through the long tunnel under Stavanger Harbor and on to the township of Bjerkreim.

The first stop was Vikeså, known as one of many places in Bjerkreim where the distant ancestors of Svale and Sigbjørn had come from. It was the first view of the beauty of Bjerkreim for the Americans, a township that includes barren and rocky peaks, a landscape punctuated with cascading streams and idyllic lakes. The lake at Vikeså is particularly serene. They had a lunch, typical of the county of Rogaland, that included potato balls.

Now, on to Hytland itself, but first there were many encounters with sheep, up close and personal! Sheep long have been important to the farmers of Bjerkreim, and they range over the peaks and across the roads. Their grazing makes it impossible for many trees to grow on the peaks, which adds to the barren majesty of the township. Soon, the twisting road gave a view of a small group of houses: Hytland farm.

The last member of Svale and Sigbjørn's family had left the farm in 1923, but Reidar had arranged with Ragnhild Brattebø, the current resident, to receive the party. The farmhouse where the brothers were born no longer stands, but she has a picture of it. Despite the rain, the families walked down the country road to a cascading stream. This was the most emotional part of the visit, as they recalled Svale's departure down this old country road, and the mixture of good wishes and regret that they all must have felt at his departure. The Americans also sensed the magic of the place. It was easy to imagine what it must have been like for Svale and Sigbjørn to explore this stream as boys, to fish there, to hear its sound — as the visitors did themselves — and to dream. Oddbjørg said that this was where Reidar feels most at home, most comfortable.

He visits Bjerkreim often, taking runs through the countryside and cross-country skiing over the mountains.

Why had Svale left such a beautiful place? We don't have his testimony, but the answer is not hard to figure out. He had no choice but to leave. In 1853, Svale was the youngest of three adult brothers still living at a farm that would support only one full household.¹⁴ Two of them had to leave sooner or later if they wanted to have families of their own. Svale was the ninth and last child of Ståle Larsson and Birte Sigbjørnsdotter. Ståle had died in 1824 and Birte had died in 1847. All nine children were sons. Four of them died as children. Lars, born in 1803, was the oldest to survive, and he wound up on another farm in Bjerkreim and died in 1864.¹⁵ Born in 1808, Sigbjørn was the next to survive. He stayed on Hytland farm #2, where he raised his children and died in 1879. Omund was born in 1813. He lived a time on another farm in Bjerkreim, then moved in 1848 with his wife to a farm in another township: Gya in Heskestad. He moved again to Årrestad in Helleland and died in 1893. Next came Iver, born in 1819. He was married and left Hytland in 1857, first to Heskestad. Did the couple also move to the United States? Svale's letter to the family in Norway offered encouragement to Iver to follow him, but it is unknown whether or not he did.

Why Chicago? We don't know where Svale's idea came from to go on such a long journey, but at this early date in Norwegian emigration, Chicago was the magnet for immigration. Before Norwegians settled in Minnesota, they came to the Fox River valley of Illinois and Wisconsin. Before they settled in Minneapolis, they made Chicago the first urban home for Norwegians. We do not yet know the details of Svale's journey, but the typical trip at that time took Norwegians to Chicago either by way of New York City or Quebec.¹⁶ He was among the early Norwegians to come to Chicago, a burgeoning city that grew from 30,000 to 110,000 from 1850 to 1860.¹⁷ A journey such as this must have taken great courage, even if it was inevitable that Svale would leave Hytland for one destination or another.

Next, the families visited the nearby farm of Tjørn where Svale and Sigbjørn's father had lived. This farm included the little closed farmhouse of Rånetangen. They also took a long drive to the side of a mountain, over a lunar landscape of rocks, and looked down on the beautiful isolated farmstead of Dyrskogen. Accessible only by water, this farm is known for over one hundred varieties of apples. As they stood in that high and isolated place, Reidar recalled how the farms of Hytland and Tjørn had maintained an isolated shepherd's hut for the months of summer parture high in the mountains. How difficult it must have been for the shepherds to climb over these rocky peaks, and how seldom would they have travelled from their own township.

They also visited the town of Bjerkreim, where the church today is the successor to the one that had seen the many christenings, confirmations, weddings and funerals of the families' common ancestors, the records of which are the most important sources for genealogy research.

With that, they left Bjerkreim and entered the township of Time. This was the home township of the Anda branch of Gary's family. Ole Anda's¹⁸ forbears came from farms in Time

such as Risa, Mossige, Garborg,¹⁹ Fosse, Åsen, Kverneland and Njå. Reidar and Oddbjørg drove past many of them, as well as the church at Time. Time Township is not mountainous like Bjerkreim, but gently slopes into a coastal plain that is one of the most fertile places in Norway. Finally, they saw the Anda farm in the adjacent township of Klepp. This farm was where Ole Anda had been born and the place where he had taken his name. In the space of one day, they had seen the farms where three of Gary's immigrant ancestors had been born: Svale Ståleson Hytland, Ola Olsson Anda and Ingeborg Olsdtr. Kloster. Each had been born on farms near Stavanger and each had wound up in Chicago. For a family historian such as Gary, this was a genealogical tour de force, all thanks to Reidar and Oddbjørg. The sites had been the subjects of years of study. Seeing so much in one day left his head spinning!

After seeing old farmsites and the countryside, the Johnsons were treated to the cutting edge of technology -- Reidar's workplace at the ABB Flexible Automation robot manufacturing site in Byrne. Reidar is an electrical engineer, and the workshop is where robots, designed for various manufacturing tasks, are created. It is a somewhat surreal place, filled with silently moving robots, reaching, bending and clasping, during their extended trial periods to make sure they all work perfectly. This all seemed very remote from the world of Svale and Sigbjørn but, in the end, it was the world of modern technology, of e-mails and attachments and printers, that had made it possible for the two branches of the family to get in touch with each other so easily and to share what they knew.

The Johnsons also had the privilege of visiting Oddbjørg and Reidar at their home in Klepp. Oddbjørg is an artist who makes dolls, ceramics and other crafts in Norwegian folk style. She and some other artists share a nearby store, where they sell their work. They also visited Reidar's genealogy workshop.

The rest of the trip was simply tourism and relaxation: a cruise down Lysefjord, a hike in the mountaineous area of *Preikestolen* and exploration of the restaurants in Stavanger.

This account has been prepared for the other members of Svale's family in the United States with whom the Johnsons are in contact -- all members of the extended Anda family and all descended from Svale's daughter, Minnie Lawson, and her husband, Olaf Anda. The Johnsons want to share what they have learned about Svale and his story and to spread the happy news that they all still have family in Norway, despite the passage of almost a century and a half, and that they were received there warmly.

It is now their fond hope that Reidar and Oddbjørg and other members of their family will come to visit the family United States and that they bring along their sons, Frode and Tore. You will hear from us when they come!

If you want to contact Reidar and Oddbjørg, this is how to do it:

Reidar Efteland
Austringen 13
4352 KLEPPE
Norway

Dialing from the US:

011-47-51425070 home
011-47-91136401 mobil telephone
011-47-51489176 work

E-mail: reidar.efteland@rl.telia.no

In the meantime, we will be in contact to try to complete the details of the extended Anda family in the United States. Reidar and the family in Norway are eager to deepen their understanding of their relatives in the United States.

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**Written on January 22, 2001, the one-hundredth anniversary
of the death of Svale Ståleson Hytland.**



Figure 2 At right, 1116 W. Grand, Chicago. Property owned by Svale, where he lived about 1865 until death in 1901. Possibly house built by Svale referred to in 1859 letter. Photo c. 1995.

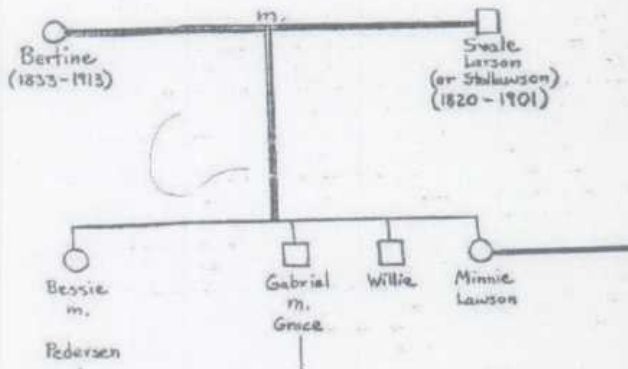


Figure 3 Excerpt of family tree, c. 1960, by Lawson C. Lunde. Note how Svale's various last names come together: Larson, "Stollawson" (for Ståleson) and Lawson, listed as his children's name. Principal source was Edith Anda Swanson, Svale's granddaughter, who was born before Svale and Bertine died.



Figure 4 Gravestones of Svale & Bertine Larson, Graceland, Chicago. (Listed under Samuel Larson.) His birthday differs from christening record.

60 **Fødsels-Registret**

No.	Nar fødsel Datum.	Barnets fulde Navn.	Døds Datum'en i Kir- ken eller hjemme.	Forældrenes Navn, Stand, Haandtering. og Boropæl.	Gadernes Navn, Stand og Opholdssted.	Hvor anført i det almin- delige Jevn- fødsels-Res- gister.	Bemærkning.
1	12	Ne	1823	Ne	Ne		
2	2 Januari	Svale	9	Staal Larsson Bertine Sigbjørnsdatter Hytland	Staal Larsson Bertine Sigbjørnsdatter Hytland		
3	9 Januari	Svale	9	Staal Larsson Bertine Sigbjørnsdatter Hytland	Staal Larsson Bertine Sigbjørnsdatter Hytland		

Figure 5 Last entry records christening of Svale, 9 March 1823, and birthday of 2 January 1823. Parents: Staale Larson and Bertine Sigbjørnsdatter Hytland. Hytland was their farm. Christening records, Bjerkreim (Evangelical Lutheran), Rogaland, Norway.

Nyida Litter i handp. tal

<p>42 $\frac{1}{2}$ Sønd - 9 Spd 3y 12' - 3 liden $\frac{1}{4}$ 33 Spd 1y 6' $\frac{1}{2}$ 399 Spd 17 - 4' $\frac{1}{4}$ 1146 Spd 7 - 1' $\frac{1}{2}$ 436 Spd 7 12'</p>	<p>41 $\frac{1}{2}$ Sønd - 140 11' 10" $\frac{1}{4}$ 27 Spd 4y 12' $\frac{1}{2}$ 19 - 12' $\frac{1}{4}$ 1 - 4 - 13 1/2' $\frac{1}{2}$ 1 - 4 1/2' $\frac{1}{4}$ 3) 2 Spd 7 - 13 1/2' $\frac{1}{2}$ 1 Spd 3y 17 1/2'</p>
<p>43 $\frac{1}{6}$ liden - 1 Spd 7' - 29 liden 3 part $\frac{1}{4}$ 37 Spd 2y 1' $\frac{1}{2}$ 4 - 3 1/2' $\frac{1}{4}$ 2 - 1 1/2' $\frac{1}{2}$ 11 Spd 7 5 1/2' $\frac{1}{4}$ 5 1/2 46 Spd 1y 12' $\frac{1}{2}$ 49 Spd 17 6 1/2'</p>	<p>42 2 Sønd - 43 Spd 2 2/3 y - 19 Spd $\frac{1}{4}$ 24 Spd 1 1/2 y - 10 1/2' $\frac{1}{2}$ 12 - 2 1/2 y - 5 1/2' $\frac{1}{4}$ 2 - 2 1/2 y - 1 1/2' $\frac{1}{2}$ 7 - 1 1/2 y $\frac{1}{4}$ 2 1/4 46 Spd 4 y $\frac{1}{2}$ 23 Spd 4 1/2 y</p>
<p>44 $\frac{1}{2}$ Spd 5 1/2 y - 1 liden 1 y 20 Spd 1 1/2 y 8' $\frac{1}{4}$ 103 1/2 $\frac{1}{2}$ 38 - 13 1/2 $\frac{1}{4}$ 129 liden 2 1/2 y $\frac{1}{2}$ 55 1/2 16 liden 15 1/2 y $\frac{1}{4}$ 2 Sønd 7 liden 1 1/2 y</p>	<p>43 5 Sønd 14 Spd 2 1/2 y - 7 Spd 9 Sønd 5 1/2 y $\frac{1}{4}$ 117 1/2 $\frac{1}{2}$ 11 1/2 Spd $\frac{1}{4}$ 5 - 1 1/2 y $\frac{1}{2}$ 2 - 1 - 15' $\frac{1}{4}$ 7 - 4 1/2 y $\frac{1}{2}$ 1 - 3 - 17 1/2 y $\frac{1}{4}$ 5 1/2 16 1/2 Spd 20 1/2 y $\frac{1}{2}$ 3 1/2 31 Spd 7 10 1/2 y</p>
<p>45 2 Brødre med ude $\frac{1}{4}$ liden - 11 y - 34 liden $\frac{1}{2}$ 10 liden 12 1/2 liden $\frac{1}{4}$ 1 1/2 10 1/2 22 Spd 3y 5' $\frac{1}{2}$ 8 - 1 - 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ 5 1/2 4 y 16' $\frac{1}{2}$ 4 1/2 4 y 2 1/2 y</p>	<p>44 III. Brødre lag alle $\frac{1}{4}$ 6 1/2 Spd 4 y 4' - 3 liden $\frac{1}{2}$ 2 1/2 y 5 1/2 y 1 3/4 $\frac{1}{4}$ 13 1/2 1 5 1/2 y 2 1/2 y $\frac{1}{2}$ 1 1/2 10 1/2 y 10'</p>

Figure 6 Math homework by Sigbjørn Ståleson. Probably about 1820. Original in possession of Reidar Efteland, great-grandson of Sigbjørn.

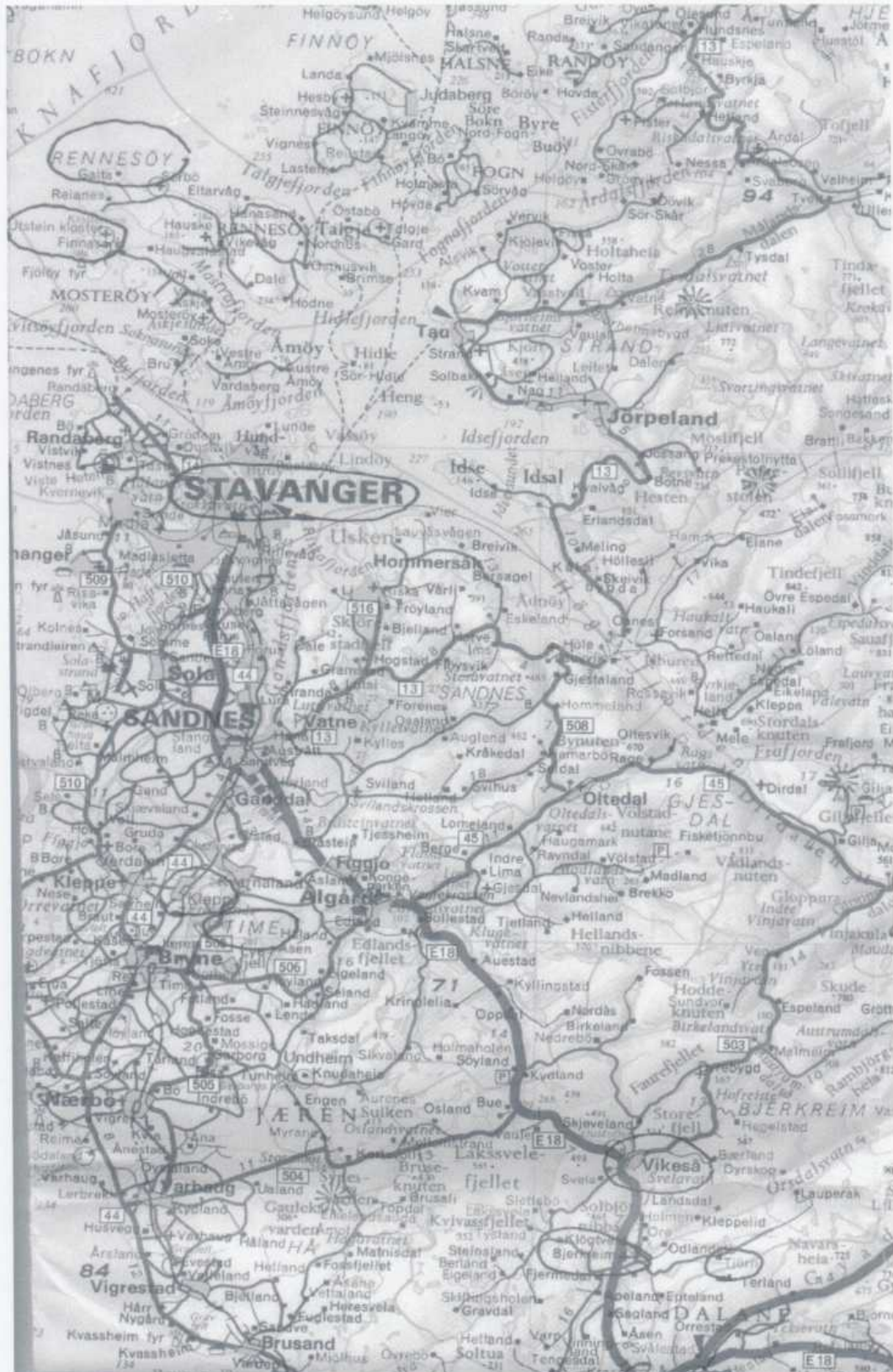


Figure 7 Some of the places mentioned in the article are circled. Hytland does not appear, but is just west of Tjørn. Cappelen's kart 1, Sør Norge-sør. 1988.



Figure 8 Farmland at Utstein Kloster, where author's Kloster ancestors worked as tenant farmers from about 1796 until 1841. Still one of the largest working farms in Norway. August 2000.



Figure 9 Timothy and Anna Johnson, Oddbjørg and Reidar Efteland, and Susan Johnson, Sorbø Church, Rennesøy Island, near Stavanger. The female branch of the author's Kloster relatives came from Rennesøy. Built 1130-50. August 2000.



Figure 10 Medieval steatite (soapstone) font from Hausken Church, Vikevåg, Rennesøy, presumably used hundreds of years for baptisms of Kloster ancestors. On loan to Sorbø Church, August 2000.



Figure 11 Timothy and Anna Johnson at Vikeså, in Bjerkreim Township, Norway. Vikeså is an ancestral farm for Svale Ståleson's family. August 2000.



Figure 12 Stream at Hytland farm, Bjerkreim. Photo by Timothy Johnson, August 2000.



Figure 13 Reidar Efteland and Gary Johnson with picture of torn-down farm buildings where their ancestors lived. Hytland farm, August 2000.



Figure 14 1945 photo, Hytland farm #2. Owned by Ragnhild Brattebø, living in new house nearby. Reprinted in Lisabet Risa, Bjerkreimboka vol. I, p.304 (1997). August 2000.



Hytlandgarden med den gamle vegen frå Odlandstø og dei tre brukene som var i drift her, då desse bileta vart teke i samband med opninga av den fyrste køyrevegen til garden i juni 1965. Det øvste biletet er teke frå nyvegen til Tjørn og viser den gamle Hytlandsvegen i venstre framgrunnen. Bnr. 1/2 ligg midt på biletet og bnr. 10 i bakgrunnen til venstre. Bnr. 1/2 vart delt mellom Palmer Brattebø og brørne hans i 1955. Bjarne Johan Brattebø

fekk då bnr. 10. Birger Brattebø bnr. 11. Bygningane til bnr. 1/2 er dei gamle bygningane på bnr. 2. Bygningane til bnr. 1 ligg der gardstunet til bnr. 10 ligg. På Tjønnefallet der naset til bnr. 11 ligg, er det tufter etter eit eldre gardbruk. Det nedste biletet viser den gamle vegen opp frå Odlandstø i framgrunnen, bnr. 1/2 i midten, bnr. 10 i bakgrunnen til venstre og bnr. 11 i bakgrunnen til høgre. Foto: Tønnes Ivesdal.

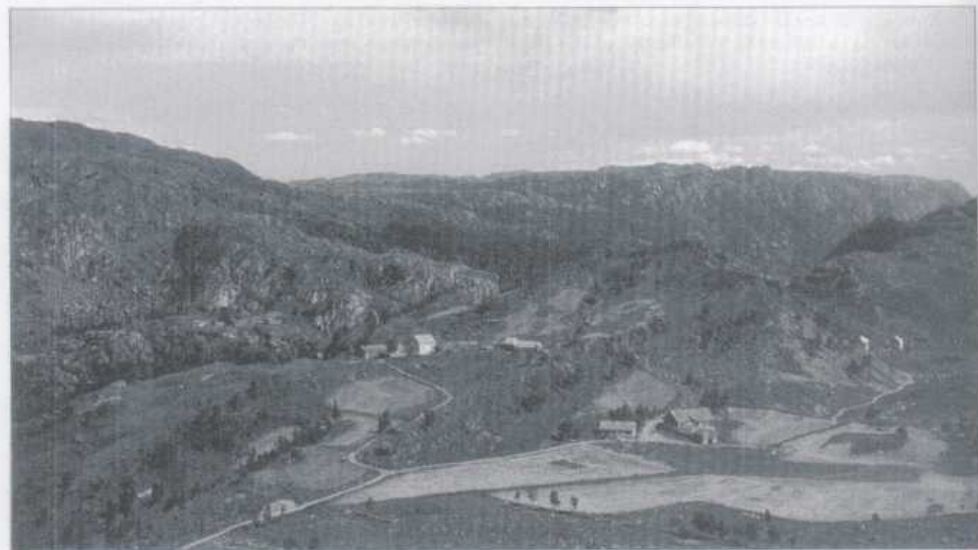


Figure 15 Old views of Hytland farm, Bjerkreimboka I., p. 300.

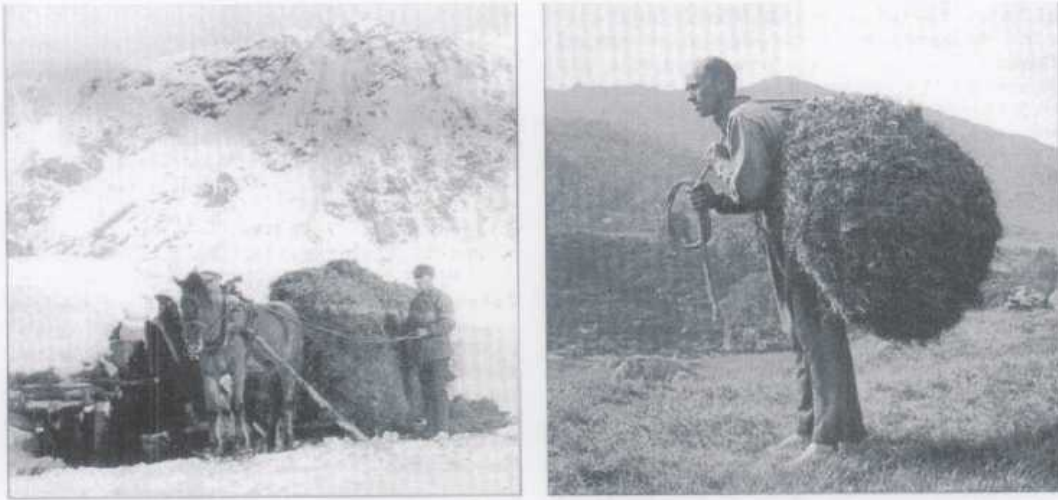


Figure 16 Hay in old Bjerkreim. Bjerkreimboka II, page 613.



Figure 17 Shepherds in old Bjerkreim. Bjerkreimboka II, page 634



Figure 18 Bridge in old Bjerkreim. Bjerkreimboka II, page 734.



Figure 19 Bjerkreim church. Bjerkreimboka I, p. 128.



Figure 20 Nordic skiing in old Bjerkreim. Bjerkreimboka I, page 537.



Figure 21 Cart road leading away from Hytland.



Figure 22 Rånetangen, Tjørn, Bjerkreim. Tjørn is another ancestral farm.



Figure 23 Horse-drawn cart at Anda farm, Klepp, where the author's Anda relatives took their name. August 2000.

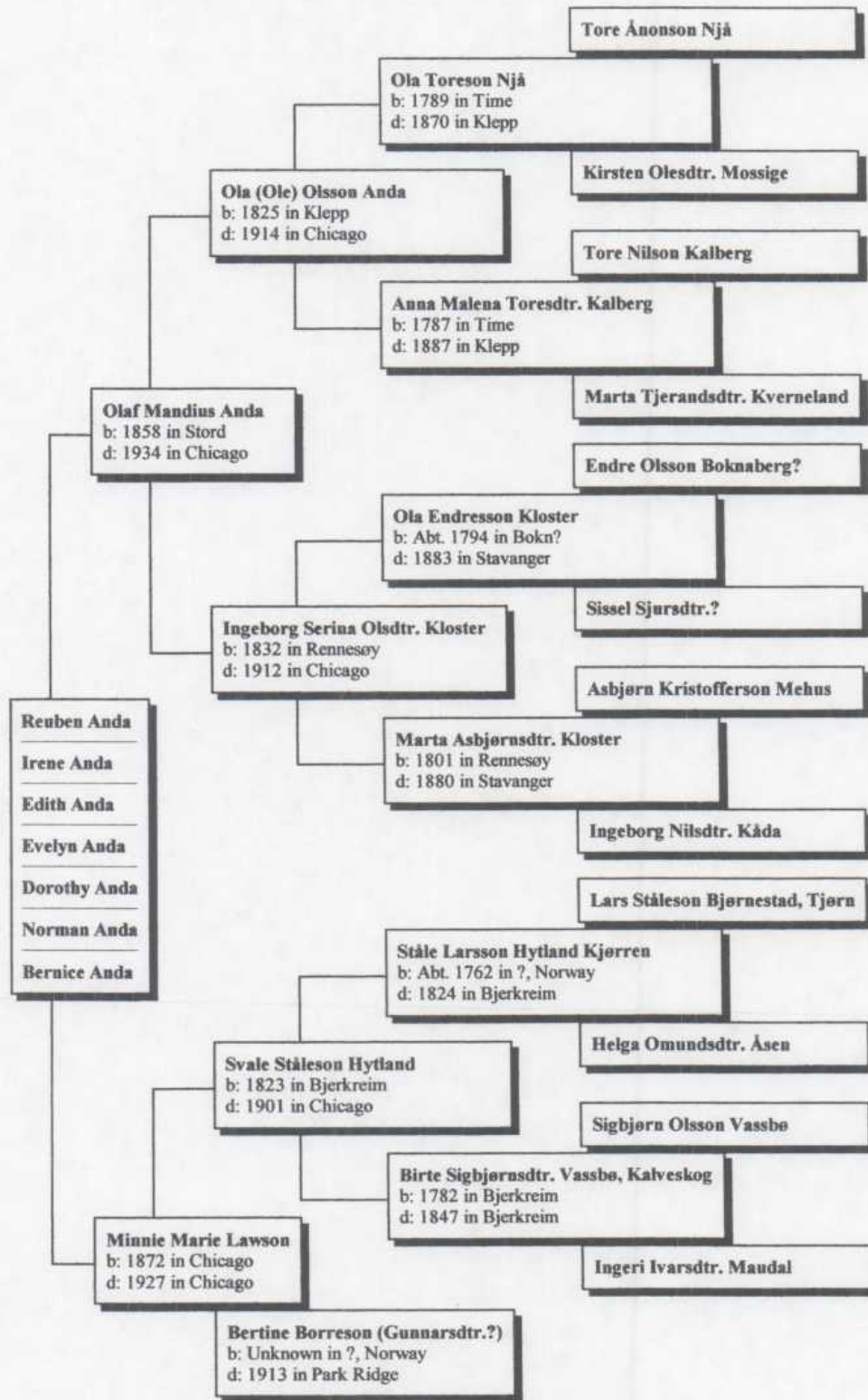


Figure 24 View towards Njå farm, Time, where author's ancestors lived until move to Anda farm in 1809.

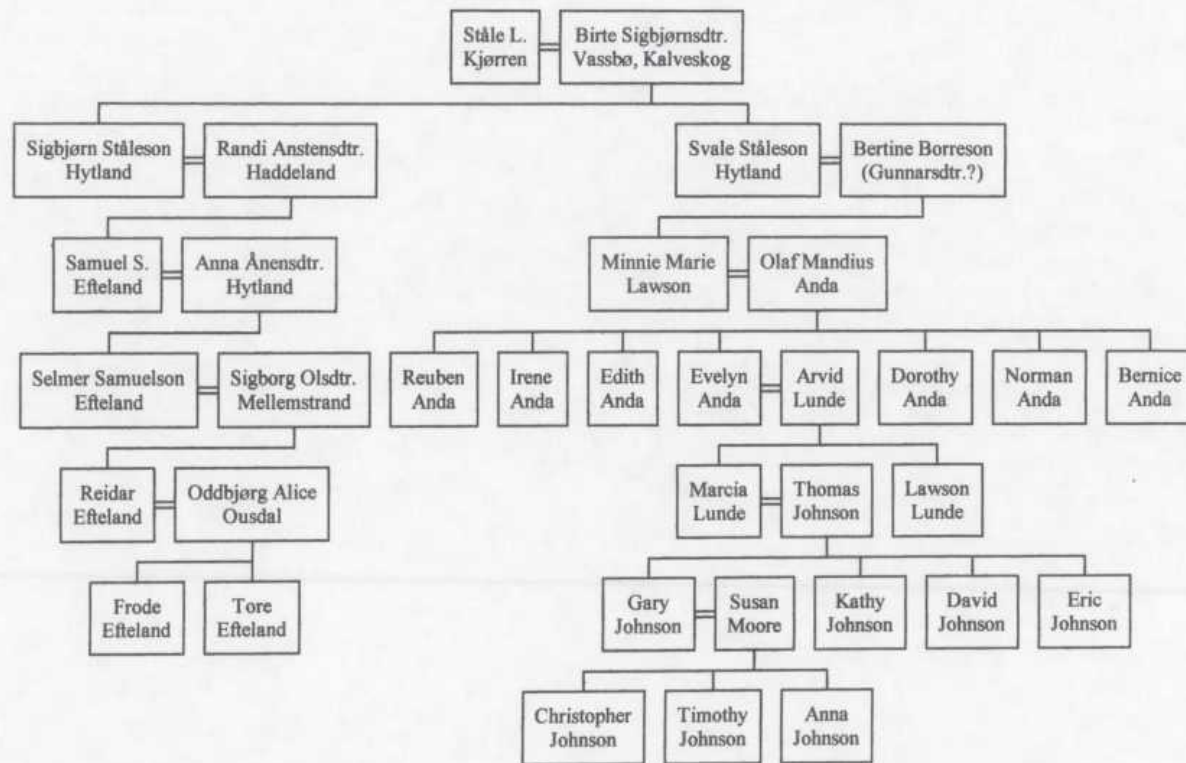


Figure 25 Reidar and Oddbjørg Alice Efteland at their home in Klepp, Norway. August 2000.

Ancestors of Svale's Anda Grandchildren

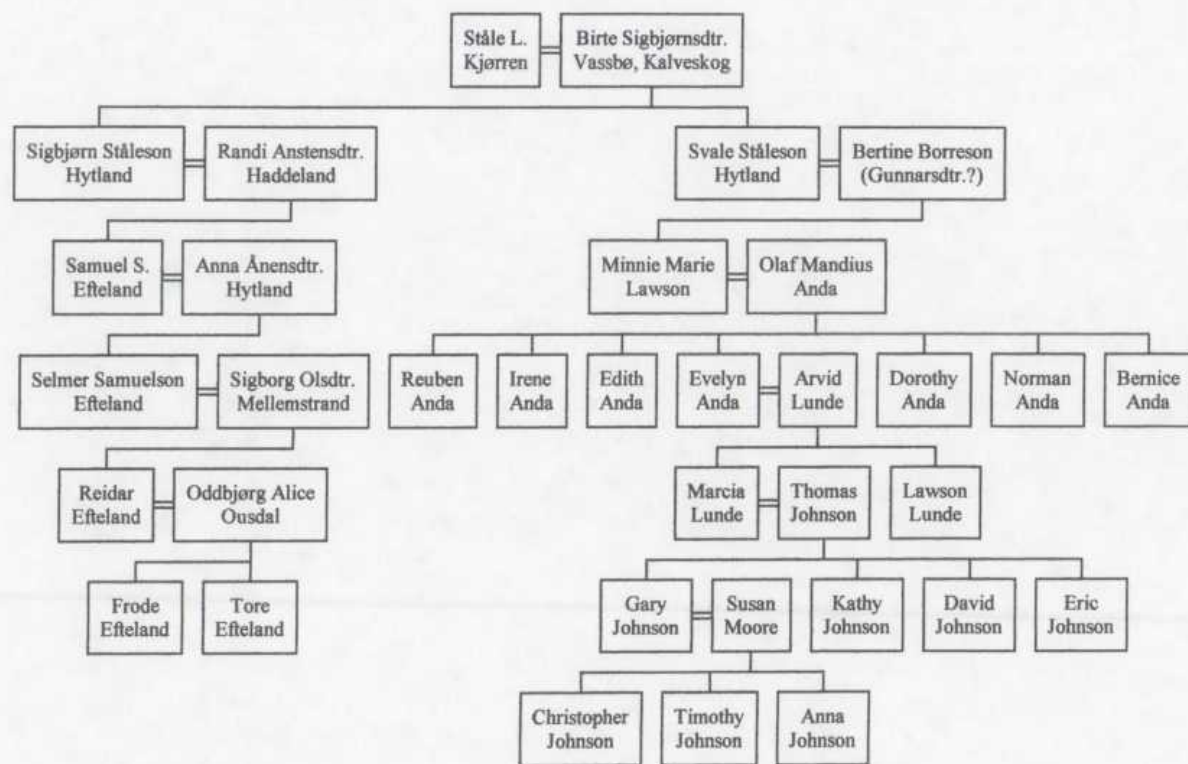


Descendants of Ståle Larsson Hytland -- Simplified



Simplified for author's relationships.

Descendants of Ståle Larsson Hytland -- Simplified



U.S. Anda family: Use this copy to draw in your own relationships. All should be descended from Evelyn Anda or one of her siblings.

Chicago D. 17 August 1859

Svale Staalesen, Sigbjørn, Hytland

I have just received your letter of the 17th of August and I am glad to hear from you. I am well and hope these few lines will find you the same. I have not much news to write at present. I am still in Chicago and have not yet had time to visit my friends. I will write again when I have more news to tell you. I am, my dear brother, ever your affectionate brother, Svale Staalesen.

17 August 1859

Figure 26 First page of letter dated 17 August 1859 in Chicago from Svale Staalesen (Ståleson) Hytland to his brother Sigbjørn Staalesen Hytland, still living at their birthplace, Hytland farm #2, Bjerkreim Township, Rogaland County, Norway. Look for the words “Chicago” and “17August 1859” in the first line.

APPENDIX

"America Letter" from Svale Ståleson Hytland, born 1823, in Bjerkreim Township, Rogaland County, Norway. He was thirty-six years old when he wrote this letter. He wrote to his brother, Sigbjørn Ståleson Hytland, born 1808. (His brother, Omund Gya, to whom he refers, was born in 1813. Brother Iver was born in 1819.) The Norwegian language has changed considerably since 1859. This text is close to Danish in many ways and is written in the local Bjerkreim dialect. I have added punctuation and paragraph breaks to make it easier to read. Many thanks to Reidar Efteland of Klepp, Norway, great-grandson of the addressee, for his invaluable assistance with many Norwegian expressions and, most of all, for safeguarding the original letter.

Gary T. Johnson, Evanston, Illinois, January 22, 2001 (the hundredth anniversary of the death of Svale Ståleson (Staalesen), who also was known in Chicago as Samuel Larson or Lawson).

Chicago the 17th of August 1859

Dear Brother Sigbjørn Staalesen

[This section is illegible.]

Your dear letter to me from November 7 [1858] is right at hand and I likewise have obtained a letter from brother Omund Gya dated the 17th of November [1858]. I received both letters about a month's time after they were sent in the mail. Dear brother, it may seem to you that there has been an ungodly delay in replying to you but I will tell you the reason. There has been some difficulty here and I have not turned to writing for a while, but I will not delay writing my letter any longer. I will now answer you as best I can.

I see from your letter that you are living well at home. This makes me very glad. I see from your letter that it is your wish that I should come back again, but I can hardly do that because my decision for now is that I settle down. Last summer at about this time of year, I bought a lot where I have built a house and the lot cost around \$1,400. I owe some money still, but I shall certainly get enough money to pay for it in time and so it will be good to own the property free and clear. I have rented the house out for \$12 per month, but I also have many expenses with heavy taxes (fire tax, water fees and municipal tax). Taxes go around \$30 a year, so that you can understand why people here must pay a lot.

So that you can understand why we need to pay water fees, I must give you a short description of the town of Chicago. It lies at the southern end of the large inland waterway called "Michigan," and it lies in the northern part of the State of Illinois. The town's length is easily three quarters of an [old] Norwegian mile [i.e., 5.25 miles or 7.5 kilometers] and its width is one-half of an [old] Norwegian

mile [i.e., 3.5 miles], but it is so long that it is not built out very far in width. The river that is the town's harbor divides the city in three parts. The whole area is a big plain that extends so far that the eye can see no elevations. The city is supplied with water by a steam engine that pumps water out of the lake and then goes through pipes that are buried in the ground in all parts of the town. Those who want water inside their homes must pay a yearly fee based on the building's size. (The water is fine.) The town's inhabitants number 110,000. There are easily 200 churches of which there are six Norwegian and Swedish churches. Among them is one Norwegian church that is just the same as at home in every way and is served by the Norwegian priest from the county [Rogaland County, Norway] who is present here.

You spoke, dear brother, about how I have not been homesick. Since coming here I can say that I am as satisfied as I was in Norway and that it is not as bad here as the unfounded rumors would have it. Here are no bloody wars with other countries and no civil war since I came here. There is a degree of contagious illness, as in other countries. There are certain numbers of swindlers here, but we can be on the look-out for them. Usually, there is no hunger here.

The sun and the other celestial bodies seem to be the same distance away as they are in Norway, but the days here are never as long and never as cold as in Norway. There is no extended twilight here. Here, it is dark right after sunset. America lies so far west that when it is noon here it is six o'clock in the evening in Norway. [What we need here most of all is money [this text unclear].]

I also see from your letter that you want me to say something about the Norwegians who live here whom you know from home. Ole Aamot I know nothing about, but he must be living in Minnesota. Torkel Løberag and Claus Wigesaee live here in the city and are living well. Well, the three siblings from Østrimdal [Austramdal farm in Bjerkreim] and their mother are also here and living well. I have been told by a newcomer from Hæsted in Helleland diocese that brother Iver is still thinking about settling in America but that he is having second thoughts about it. Ask him to write to me immediately so that I can write him back and tell him what is best for him to bring along for here.

I must now close my letter this time with prayers that you give a warm greeting to all my brothers and relatives and all my friends. I ask that you will write me back as soon as you possibly can because it is very precious to receive a letter from you. I thank you for the news you have sent me. In the future, I won't take as long a time in answering your letter as I did this time.

The warmest greetings to you and the family from your brother.

Svale Staalesen

Hans Tobias Mauritsen asks me to send you his greetings.

About the Illustrations

Unless otherwise noted, all illustrations were taken by the author during the visit to Norway of August 2000. See *Bjerkreimboka* for the attribution of the photos reproduced from that book.

About the Endnotes

I have included more endnotes than anyone will need or than I ever wanted. The reason is simple. Even though this is a simple account of a happy reunion between Norwegian and American relatives in from one family line, we also had the privilege of visiting sites associated with other branches of the Anda family. A separate book could be written about each branch of the family, and with any luck and enough time, I will write one. A book about Ole Anda and his ancestors has been written, and I am in the process of writing a book about the Kloster ancestors and rewriting my first book about Svale and his ancestors. I decided that this short piece ought to include detailed information regarding all the original immigrants to America in the Anda family. That way, whether the books are completed or not, the family in the U.S. will have information that tracks their immigrant ancestors to their origins to Norway. The only one whose origins are missing at this time is Bertine, Svale's wife. To do this adequately takes many endnotes.

For those who are not interested in the details, at least scan the endnotes for some of the old family stories that have been handed down. Gary Johnson

Endnotes

1. Lawson Lunde reported at the time that his principal source for that part of the family tree was Svale's granddaughter, Edith Anda Swanson, who was born in Chicago in the 1890s.
2. Lisabet Risa, *Bjerkreimboka, Folket og eigedomane gjennom dei siste fem hundre åra*, vols. I & II, (Bjerkreim kommune og SpareBank; Bjerkreim, Norway, 1997). Those interested in learning more about the local history of Bjerkreim are fortunate indeed that Lisabet Risa is the author of this project and that the resulting books are so complete, due to her diligence and scholarship.
3. He is listed as Hytland 28.9 in *Bjerkreimboka* vol. I, p. 310. Sigbjørn is 28.4 and 29.
4. Her death certificate lists the name of her father as "Gunnar Borreson." In other words, she also may have followed the American custom of taking her last name from her father. If so, her original name in Norway could have been "Bertine Gunnarsdtr." Interestingly, the 1860 U.S. Census for Svale and Bertine indicates that living with them in Chicago were Mary Boreson, 15, and Ann Boreson, 25. As with Svale, over the years Bertine's name was recorded various ways: Bertine, Bertina and Bertha, Borreson, Booresen, and Boreson. For simplicity, I will use Bertine Borreson.

5. Born Chicago, January 12, 1872, died Chicago, January 19, 1927. See note 12.
6. Bessie Lawson Pedersen, born Chicago in 1861?; died presumably in California. Gabriel E. Lawson, born Chicago January ?, 1867, died Chicago January 11, 1935 (a clock salesman); and Willie Lawson, born Chicago July 12, 1870, died Chicago December 26, 1899. Bessie had two sons, Burt and George, and Gabriel had at least one daughter, Harriet Lawson Skudstedt. See Family Tree by Lawson C. Lunde. The existence of two other unnamed children who did not survive is inferred from answers to 1900 U.S. census questions as to number of children, living and dead, for Svale and Bertine.
7. The original street name was Indiana and the original street number was 241 West. It is possible that the brick two-flat standing at 1116 W. Grand today is the building that Svale built, because the Chicago Building Department has no record of any permits issued at that location since its records were destroyed during the Chicago Fire. In the Edwards' Annual Directory for the City of Chicago for 1870 (Chicago, 1869), Svale is first listed at this address in 1869 and he was living there when he died in 1901. Before that, he was at 40 Fourth Street, believed to be the current 415 West Ohio. See, e.g., D.B. Cooke & Co., Chicago City Directory for the Year 1860-1861. (Chicago, 1860.)
8. Lovisa (Lovise) Luthersdtr. Hytland, born August 25, 1893 at Rånetangen, Hytland, died June 20, 1985 in Bjerkreim. Bjerkreimboka vol. I, pages 199, 314-315, Hytland 38.4 and Bjerkreim 200. Svale was the uncle of Lovise's father, Luther Sigbjørnson Hytland, (Hytland 29.5 & 38). Accordingly, Lovise was the second cousin of Evelyn Anda Lunde, the author's grandmother. It was Lovise who gave Svale's letter to Reidar. As with many Norwegians of her era, she spent time in the US (1923-29, 1930-32, 1947-1960), including in New York, but returned to Bjerkreim.
9. Ingeborg Serina (Serene) Olsdtr. Kloster, born Utstein Kloster, April 24, 1832, died Chicago, September 12, 1912. Listed in Birger Lindanger and Jørg Eirik Waula, Rennesøy gard og ætt. (Rennesøy Kommune, 1993), vol. 3, pp. 1498, Utstein Kloster Paktarar 4.4. She was the brother of Asbjørn Kloster, Paktarar 4.2, born Utstein Kloster December 21, 1823, died Stavanger, January 18, 1876, a Quaker who was the founder of the total abstinence movement in Norway, and whose statue (by Valentin Axel Kielland) is prominently displayed in Stavanger to this day. The story told by Evelyn Anda Lunde is that this is his *second* statue — the first was melted down when it was discovered that the sculptor drank liquor! Another brother was Christopher Kloster (Kristoffer Kloster), born February 24, 1830, Paktarar 4.6, who in 1857 founded a Norwegian colony on Quebec's Gaspé Peninsula. The colony failed miserably. He died in Chicago August 19, 1901, after living there 24 years. For Asbjørn Kloster and the Rennesøy - Stavanger Quaker connection, see Martin Nag, Ryfylke-kvekerne! Utvandring!: Essays og myter. (Kveldsbel-eika forlag, Stavanger, 2000). For more on the failed colony, see Theodore C. Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition. (The Norwegian-American Historical Association, Northfield, Minnesota, 1940), pages 357-382.

10. Erling Brunnes, *Klepp gards - og ættesoge gjennom 400 år 1519-1900*. (Klepp Kommune, Stavanger, 1980). Anda farm #2, 32g, page 36. Born Klepp, October 4, 1825, died Chicago, April 22, 1914. He also lived in Hordaland (at various times from 1843-1844 in Mosterhamn, Engesund and Valevåg and Einstapvoll near Valestrand, from which he took official leave for Chicago on May 10, 1884.) Ingeborg and Ola married in Stord parish on August 4, 1857. They had eight children between 1858 and 1877, seven boys and a girl (their U.S. names: Olaf, Olai, Serine, John, Asborn, Thorwald, Martin and Joseph), all of whom lived to emigrate to Chicago. He was known as "Ole" Anda in Chicago, where he sold lutefisk and fruit juices in the Anda Brothers store at 1449 N. Campbell (rear). The other storekeeper was Ole's brother, Andreas Anda.

11. Born June 17, 1858 at Valevåg, Stord (now Valestrand), died Chicago, March 24, 1934. The story told by his son-in-law, Arvid Lunde, is that when Olaf returned from school to be a skipper, he found his family had departed for Chicago. His dreams of being the captain of a ship never came to pass, and he joined the family in Chicago, where he became a salesman. He met Svale's daughter, Minnie Marie Lawson, when he was her Sunday School teacher. They married in Chicago at St. Paul's English Evangelical Lutheran Church on September 17, 1891.

12. Born Chicago, January 12, 1872; died Chicago, January 19, 1927. Their children (Svale's Anda grandchildren) were: Reuben, Irene Lutz, Edith Swanson, Evelyn Lunde (the author's grandmother), Dorothy (Harrisville) Rockford, Norman and Bernice Varland.

13. Ingeborg's parents were Ola Endresson Kloster possibly born Boknaberg, Bokn, circa 1794, died Stavanger, January 8, 1883, Utstein Kloster Paktarar 4, and Marta Asbjørnsdtr. Kloster, Paktarar 1.3., christened March 19, 1801, died Stavanger September 9, 1880. (Source for information regarding deaths: Medlemsskapsprotokol 1857-1898, Privatarkiv 160, no. 47,4, Stavanger Regional Archives. Note that the 1865 census <<<http://www.digitalarkivet.uib.no/>>> lists Hjelmeland as Ole's birthplace; the reference to Bokn came from Rennesøy gard og ætt.) Marta's parents, both from Rennesøy Island itself, were Asbjørn Kristofferson Mehus, 1.8.1 and Ingeborg Nilsdtr. Kåda 1.10.7. Ola and Marta also spent some time in the 1850s at their son Christopher's settlement in Quebec, before returning to Stavanger.

14. Svale's parents were: Ståle Larsson Kjørren, Hytland (Tjørn 9.1), born about 1762, died Bjerkreim, January 23, 1824, and Birte Sigbjørnsdtr. Vassbø (see Kalveskog in. 19.8), christened Bjerkreim April 21, 1782, died Bjerkreim, June 3, 1847. Information about the parents and siblings of Svale can be found in Bjerkreimboka, I, pp. 310, #28.

15. He could not swim and drowned while transporting a cow in a small rowboat. Bjerkreimbok I, p. 632.

16. Ann Urness Gesme, *Between Rocks and Hard Places*, (Gesme Enterprises, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1993), preface p. iv. This is an excellent guide to the conditions in Norway during the period when Norwegians emigrated to the United States.

17. Odd S. Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life: The Norwegians in Chicgo before 1930*, (Norwegian-American Historical Association, Champaign, Illinois, 1988), page 37. This book is the indispensable source on the life of the Norwegian-American community in Chicago.

18. Ole's parents were: Ola Toreson Njå, Njå farm #1, 10.b, christened in Time January 25, 1789, died in Klepp, September 11, 1870, and Anna Malena Toresdtr. Kalberg, Søra Kalberg farm #2, 8.b, christened in Time October 14, 1787, died in Klepp July 4, 1887, just short of her one-hundredth birthday. Ole Anda said in 1907 "Mother lived so long in order to pray for us children," of whom there were nine. Program from Zion Lutheran Church, Chicago, August 4, 1907, on the occasion of the 50th wedding anniversary of Ole and Ingeborg (in possession of author).

19. The Garborg farm was the birthplace of the Norwegian poet and novelist, Arne Garborg. Garborg #2, 17.1 (originally Ådne.) In 2001 Norway celebrates the 150th anniversary of his birth. He was a relative of the Anda family in the U.S., but not a direct ancestor.