

How I use Norwegian Archives to do Norwegian Family History Research

By Richard Busath

There are some things you need to know that will be really helpful in doing Norwegian family history research.

First, you need to know the county in Norway where our family comes from. For Christian Busath, his paternal side relatives are from Sør-Trøndelag and Nor-Trøndelag counties. Jens was born in Budal on the Solemsvold farm which is located in Sør-Trøndelag county. Jens married Guru Andersdatter and they lived on Buseth (Buset) farm. Bersvend Jensen, Christian's father, was born on Buseth farm. Buseth Farm is located in Sør-Trøndelag County in Norway. Jens and Guru lost the farm, and they moved to Verdal in Nor-Trøndelag County in Norway. All of their children moved to Verdal, except Bersvend who moved to Storen in Sør-Trøndelag County Norway.

Christian's aunts and uncles on his paternal side moved to Verdal Nor-Trøndelag. Some of the cities you should become familiar with are Verdal, Levanger, Frol, Meraker, and Sandvollan. A few of his cousins moved to Sweden about 30 miles to the east of Verdal.

Christian's family on his maternal side are from Sør-Trøndelag county. Usually, our relatives married people living in the same county, but there are a few exceptions. The main parishes of interest to our family are Storen, Singsås (Singsaas), Horg, Budal, Oppdal (Opdal), and Soknedal.

It is helpful to look at a map of the area and become familiar with the geography of the counties. You can either use Google maps or Norgeskart. Norgeskart probably gives you a better idea where the farms are located.

Second, the Lutheran church is the predominant religion in these counties. Almost all of the people would have their children christened in their local parish. They would also marry in the local parish, usually in the bride's home parish, but not always. When they died, they would be buried in the local parish cemetery. The cemetery surrounds the local parish church.

The Lutheran church in Norway was organized with clerical districts (*prestegjeld*) that included one or more parishes (*sogn*). Often, as in the case of Støren and Verdal, the clerical district includes a local parish of the same name. In LDS terms, the organization is similar to a stake center that includes wards and branches.

Norwegians used the patronymic naming system until 1923 when Norway passed a law that all families needed a family surname. During the 1800's there were so many people with the same name, such as Jens, John, Gurtude, Olga, and with the same patronymic last name, such as Olsen, Johnsen, and Jensen, that it became necessary to distinguish one Jens Jensen from another. To do this, people were often identified by the name of the farm where they lived. For

example, Christian's father was known as Bersvend Jensen Buseth because he was born on the Buseth farm.

Bersvend kept the Buseth surname even when he moved away from Buseth. But in earlier times, if someone moved from one farm to another, the old farm name was dropped, and the individual became known by the name of the farm where they currently lived.

It's also important to recognize that in earlier times spelling was not standardized to the same extent it is today. Different parish priests could spell the same family or farm name differently. For example, John, Jon, or Joen could all be the same person. And spellings could change over time. For example, Bueset, Busæt, Buseth, and Busath all refer to the same farm.

Third, here are links to the two sites I use to do research on Norwegian lines.

<https://media.digitalarkivet.no/en/> (the first site, or scanned archives)

<https://www.digitalarkivet.no/en/> (the second site, or digital archives)

The first link takes you to a site where you can look up a specific parish record in a certain year.

If you know the birth date and birthplace, you can go to this site, enter the county, city, and year in the search box, and the search engine will take you to all the parish records in the city you want. You then click on birth records the search engine will then take you several birth years. You then click on the year you are looking for and the search engine then takes you to images of the birth records in that parish. You then scroll through the records until you find the person you are looking for. You can also look for marriage records and death records if you know the dates. This also works if you know the birth year, but not the birth month and day.

The second link takes you to a site where you can search for individuals. I use both links, but I always start out with the second link first.

You click on the link and go to the search engine site. You have many options. In the source period, I enter the birth year if I know it and then add a 100 years for the second range of sources. Then I only enter the first name, gender, and birth year. Then click on search. If this results in a hit of thousands of names, I will then go to geography and click on the + tab. This will take you to a list of counties. You need to click on Trøndelag, this will take you to a drop down tab that reads Sør-Trøndelag and Nor-Trøndelag. I then click on one of the two tabs and then it gives you a list of parishes. If you know the parish, then click on it and then click on search. This will give you a lot less hits and you can usually find the person you are looking for.

The second site will give you hits on census, christenings (most christening records include the birth date), marriage, death, emigration, confirmation, and police records. You really need to enter multiple search choices to get all the information. It is also important to look at the record and make sure it is our family and not someone else's family.

If you enter the birth date month and day in the search box, it will only pull up records that list that birth date. Certain census records and marriage records list the age but not the birth date. These records will not pull up if you put the birthday and month in the search box. You need to only put the birth year in the search box.

You have to do multiple searches sometimes. Enter the last name both patronymic and farm name. You can only enter one of the names at a time. Search for surrounding cities or just the county name like Sør-Trøndelag or Nor-Trøndelag. In 1964 Sør-Trøndelag became Midtre-Gauldal county. If you find death records listing Midtre-Gauldal as the death place after 1964 that is the correct county for most of our ancestors.

The second site really works well if the person you are looking for was born in the 1800's. If the person was born in the 1900's you can usually find them in the 1910 or 1920 census. The 1920 census gives you the birth date and where they were born. About a third of the time, you can get an indexed marriage record and about two thirds of the time you can get an indexed death record. You cannot get an image of the record that was indexed after 1930. At least I don't know how to get an image of the record.

I hope this helps in researching Norwegian records.