

Help your Norwegian ancestors come to life using little-used sources

Presented by Rune Nedrud Email: rune@nedrud.net

Nedrud Genealogy: <http://www.nedrud.net>

Researching genealogy in Norway is for the most part done by using the Norwegian Digital Archive at <http://digitalarkivet.no>. The website was established by the Norwegian National Archive in 2001 and has since grown considerably. This site includes all the national censuses and all available church registers in addition to various other important sources for genealogists. And it has been free from the start and still is. You do not need registering or paying a fee for using this site. You might choose English as language for the menus, but the sources will of course remain in Norwegian.

Censuses and church registers

Most people searching for their ancestors are using the censuses and church registers on that site, but I am going to show some other sources that are lesser known and lesser used but important for the understanding of your ancestor's daily life and surroundings. You will get a glimpse in to the inventory, crops and animals the family owned and what kind of life they were having.

Starting with a family in the census of 1865 we will probe into their daily life and see what is possible for us to find about the family members through sources that mainly is online for everyone, but also some sources that are available offline, either in local archives or for sale at various locations and websites. Not all is for free even in Norway if you want to examine your ancestor's life and doings.

It is necessary to use both the indexed version and the scanned originals of a census to find all information about the family. The indexed data are showing the family members but not the crops or the animals on the farm.

Insurance taxation

Insurance taxation is another little known source of information. They include descriptions of all the property and houses on the farms. They lack indexes and are not alphabetic. You will have to search the originals page by page.

Court protocols

Court protocols are important. They will state any disagreement between people and the criminal acts prosecuted by the state or local authorities towards the civilians. Lots of witness statements will give you information about your ancestors before the church registers started and are in many cases the only source giving you names of the wives of your ancestors. Protocols can be found at The Norwegian Digital Archives but are not searchable. They span the period from around 1600 to 1850. For Oppland County there has been made a transcription that is available as a book with full registers of farm names and a person index.

Prison registers

Many Norwegians was imprisoned for a few days or for longer periods of their lives. The arm of the law was long and reached most people one way or another during a lifetime. You should not do much to get a sentence in those older days. Norway was a country with strict laws back then. Not many protocols has been scanned by The Digital Archives but a lot of protocols has been scanned and processed by The Norwegian Genealogical Society and can be found on their website at www.genealogi.no. Various other documents and family books are also available at the same website. For some of these online sources you have to become a member of the genealogical society.

Prisoner Photos

The Digital Archive has released thousands of photos of prisoners from the state prisons in the 1850s up till about 1900. These photos are important since it was often poor people that would never have had their photos taken if they had to pay for it themselves.

Muster rolls

The Norwegian-Danish army was formed in 1628 and the muster rolls are kept in the thousand counting and describing the soldiers names, age, stature, home farm or birth place, and sometimes even familiar connections.

Indexes of poor people

The Norwegian Government did register all people that once or more got help from the government, financially or otherwise. Those protocols are available online and you will often find people there that later emigrated, trying to find a better life abroad. Many traveled to the USA, either with governmental help or with help and money from relatives that had already emigrated and found a new life in America.

Probates

Probate protocols has been available for some years at The Digital Archives and lately also registers for the same protocols. Many thousand farms across the country are to be found in the indexes and they also has names attached. Who was dead and who was the heirs of the property? You will find it in these indexes.

Farm names

There is a full list of farm names online that is valuable to people that want to know where the farm is placed and how the spelling of the farm name changed through time from medieval times up till the 1900.

Norwegian maps

There are some maps online, also historical maps are available for free.

The most important online map is www.seeiendom.no where it is possible to search farm names and see the size of the property both visually and by text at the same time.

Local genealogical sources

There are many small museums and archives in Norway. Not all of them has made their material available online. Some sells it on a CD or USB-stick, while others only have books or paper-based documents that requires you to visit them on site. Some examples will be shown that are available either online for payment and downloading or that you need to buy at a museum, meaning you need to know persons in Norway or travel there yourself.

Emigrant information

Some of the local genealogical societies have made large registers of emigrants. Some are available online and some are printed in books. These registers are valuable to Norwegian-Americans looking for roots back in Norway.