

NORWAY

May 27-June 7, 2024

By Peter Blyberg

Our recent visit to Norway was rich in sights, experiences and, of course, people. I had dreamed about such a trip soon after I started doing family history research in 2000. One of my earliest discoveries was the immigration record of **Kaya Engebretsen**, my paternal grandmother, who arrived at Ellis Island in 1904. The Ellis Island website was in its infancy, slow and clunky. But I was so excited by the discovery of that ancestor, and I was hooked. (I now manage 6 online trees!)



I have since done substantial research of my Norwegian ancestors and relatives, but never had a chance to see their environments, to walk the locations of their homes and churches (and burial places), to really sense their lives. This trip's purpose was to see those ancestral places in Kragerø and in the Hønefoss area.

We had two big assets going into the trip that proved to be enormously valuable. First, and foremost, was the warmth and friendship offered by longtime friends of Linda who have Minnesota connections. They met us at the airport, offered us meals, introduced us to their families, and drove us around. They proved invaluable in bridging the language gap when

other people's English did not fully convey their thoughts. (Of course, my Norwegian is virtually nonexistent.)

Second, I hired a Norwegian genealogist to do research, primarily in the Hønefoss area (where she accompanied us), but also in Kragerø. Liv Christensen is a devoted genealogist who works for Ancestry.com. She provided a wealth of background information, online sources and had visited many of the sites before we arrived.

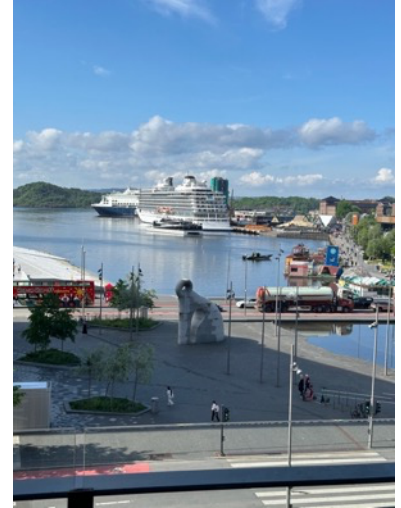
OSLO (27May-31May)

We landed in Oslo on May 27 after a short flight from Ireland where we had vacationed for over a week (and blessedly worked through any jet lag.)

Upon arrival, a close friend of Linda's, Hakon Blandehoel, drove us to his lovely Oslo home where his wife, Sissel, had prepared a celebratory dinner. Also joining were their sons, Glenn and Jørn, plus the latter's family. What a splendid introduction to Norway, relaxing and eating with such kind, intelligent people!



Hakon then drove us to our hotel, the Thon Opera, centrally located at the head of Oslofjord. Our lovely room overlooked the man-made glacier rising from the harbor, the 16-year-old Operahuset. Tram and bus lines ran directly in front, the rail station in back.



The next day, May 28, was beautiful and sunny, about 70°. Another family friend of Linda's, Anker Johnsen (and Hakon's cousin), took us to Frogner Park. This huge green space embraces Vigeland Sculpture Park with over 200 sculptures in granite, bronze, and wrought iron. This fascinating and powerful statement represents the lifework of Gustav Vigeland, a famed Norwegian artist. (I was last there in 1965, on my way to the University of Stockholm to study economics for 6 months.)





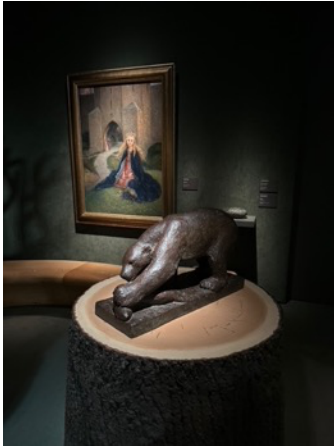
Anker then drove us up into the steep hills outside Oslo to Holmenkollen, site of a famous ski jump and sports museum. Lunch was al fresco at the Holmenkollen Restaurant, savoring the view and conversing with the informative Anker. (My cousin, Eric Wahlstrom, took me there in 1965!)



We three returned to the hotel and walked to the massive 2-year-old Munchmuseet. This stunning edifice houses the largest collection of Edvard Munch's paintings, evincing the diversity of his work beyond the famous *Scream* (called Skrik [Shriek] in Norwegian, a better name, I think). Munch, after years in Europe and in poverty, moved to Kragerø for 6 years, painting portraits and street scenes. The Museet exhibits an enormous canvas of *Sunrise* (and variations) from Munch's time in Kragerø; a few days later we saw the statue marking where he stood when painting it.



The following day, Wednesday the 29th, we went to the National Gallery, housed in a bold new (2022) structure, expansive and well organized. (Clearly Norway's North Sea oil profits are going to good use!). Norwegian artists of many media, displayed by period and style, are the focus, but the Gallery also exhibits works by many others. I got a clear sense of emerging Norwegian nationalism around the turn of the 20th century (Norway was released from the "loving" embrace of Denmark in 1814, from Sweden in 1905.).



A room I particularly enjoyed featured paintings and sculptures representing Norwegian myths and folktales, housed in a dimly lit, padded room with music and sound effects. It was relaxing to sit, listen and look at the art. I spent a good 15 or 20 minutes there absorbing the atmosphere.

Linda and I strolled back to the hotel, stopping at City Hall, site of the Nobel Peace Prize awards. Enormous murals depict the cultural life and history of Norway. We also saw several joyful wedding parties (small and large) waiting in line to marry.



We dressed for dinner since we were taking Anker and Trine, Hakon and Sissel, to Maaemo, a three star Michelin Restaurant in Oslo--a thank you for their hospitality. We had a private dining room on the second floor with glass windows on one side, dedicated wait staff and chef, and a fabulous three-hour dinner. It was wonderful having the room to ourselves so we could enjoy each other's company.

Having these gracious and generous friends in Oslo added such rich dimension to our travels, providing a personal element and deeper attachment to Norway.

Thursday, May 30, we took public transport to the *Fram Polar Exploration Museum*. On display are a plethora of objects and photographs from various Arctic and Antarctic explorations by intrepid Norwegian explorers. *(Here I stand on the Fram deck, launched in 1892, which Nansen took to the North Pole 1893-6, Amundsen to the South Pole in 1910.)*



The public transit system in Oslo is incredibly smooth and efficient: simply download an app and get the information you need to travel from where you are standing (!) to point B via trams, buses, trains or ferries. The app indicates when each arrives, when to walk between stops, then tracks you en route! You also pay your fare on the app (1/2 price for students and seniors). Big Brother at its best!

KRAGERØ (May 31-June 2)

Early the next morning we took the train from the hotel to the airport to pick up our rental car. Trains leave every 10 minutes and it's a 20-minute ride to Gardermoen—very efficient and smooth. We drove south to Moss where we met Anker and Trine. Our foursome took the car ferry to Horton on the west side of the Oslofjord, the town where my grandfather, **Johannes Blyberg**, studied at the technical school before emigrating to the US in 1903. From there we drove to Kragerø, and the Johnsens' stunning new cabin in Levang, about a 20-minute drive outside town.



Liv Christensen had identified an Engebretsen relative whom we arranged to meet the next day. We took the ferry from Levang to Kragerø which gave us the chance to see the town from the water, the ideal approach.



As the ferry docked, I saw a man waiting below, and even though there were many others around, I knew from his height and looks that it must be Rolf Engebretsen, our “new” relative. Joy!



Rolf drove us to his parents’ apartment. We got out of the car, and while still in the parking lot, he eagerly opened up a chart to show us his information about the Engebretsens. We compared notes and I gave him my family tree write-up about the descendants of **Nils and Berthe Engebretsen**.

We then went inside to meet his 80-year-old father, Emil, and mother, Else, as well as Rolf’s wife, Anne Mari. We had a good discussion about times when other family members had visited Kragerø, as well as when Emil (a 16-year-old seaman) visited Staten Island to see Gunda (nee Engebretsen—my grandmother’s sister) and John Blom. (Four of Nils’ and Berthe’s 11 children emigrated to the US.) Emil also showed us some intricate wood carvings by my grandmother’s brother, Nils Edvard.



We couldn’t halt this warm and fruitful exchange, so invited our newfound family to lunch. We walked to a delightful waterside restaurant and enjoyed a lovely meal and lively, informative conversation. (Anker and Trine were particularly helpful interpolators.)



After lunch Rolf drove us around town to see where the Engebretsens had lived, including the white-painted house of Nils and Berthe, my great grandparents. →

(Post-trip research, particularly Nils' obituary, informed me how Nils met his future wife, Berthe. He was born north of Oslo in Hallingdal, she in the Modum area on Drolsum farm, over 100km south. Nils started as a teacher in Hallingdal at the age of 16, but the miserable teaching conditions drove him to leave. Thereupon, he went to agricultural school in Adalen in 1857 and



become an agronomist. This prepared him to eventually manage (not own) several large farms in Modum, near Berthe Karine Andreasdatter's home. They were married at Heggen Kirke in Modum in 1864.

The family later moved south to Solum where he managed several properties, and also operated as an ice exporter, building several ice dams (?). By 1884 he was living in Kragerø and running his own timber business, for a time the city's largest exporter of round logs. He died there at age 92. His obituary added that "old Engebretsen was an all-around interesting man who carried on well to the end, healthy as he was. And his well-known figure was regularly seen both in the city streets and in the church until illness finally forced him to stay at home." Clearly, Nils was an inventive and hard worker.)

Rolf also pointed out where one of Nils' and Berthe's son, Nils Edvard, had lived across the water on Tatøy Island and where another of my grandmother's brothers, Harald and his family, also lived.

We saw numerous locations where Edvard Munch had painted paper and canvas, as we walked up, down and around this charming town. (Unfortunately, Nils Engebretsen's son, Emil, turned down Munch's multiple requests to paint him, thereby denying us a family legacy!)



Anker enjoyed posing with the Munch statue!



Rolf then drove us to the Lutheran church (closed) where the family had attended services, and where my grandmother, Kaya Engebretsen, was baptized. We then went to the nearby church cemetery with many Engebretsen markers.

After hugs and handshakes, we ferried back to Levang for a lovely waterside dinner chez Johnsen.



The next day, brokered by Trine, we invited Rolf and his father to hike the nearby stunning national park, with its incredible views of rocks, islands, and sea. Rolf and Emil took advantage of the warm weather and went swimming.



Our sextet returned to the Johnsen cabin for Trine's Norwegian waffles on their roof deck under a big umbrella. This truly memorable day

was made possible by the warm-hearted Anker and Trine! All too soon Emil and Rolf signed the guest book and drove home.

Meeting Rolf and his parents was the highlight of this part of the trip. I had wanted to see where the Engebretsens lived, but having family welcome us so generously and show us around was extraordinarily special.

(Emil also recalled visits from Di Perry, my second cousin. The family clearly had enjoyed keeping in touch, but nothing had happened for the past 30 or 40 years. Since the trip ended, I've been in contact with Rolf, exchanging photos and information about the family).



HØNEFOSS (June 2-6)

Monday morning, June 2, we left the Johnsens' and drove north to Hønefoss for the next leg of our journey. My goal was to visit the farms, houses and churches associated with the Blyberg side of the family. We had originally tried to stay at the Sundvolden Hotel, an historic property in our family from about 1809 to 1932. (It is now a convention center and the original hotel is only a small part of the entire complex.) But it was fully booked except for our last night. As a result, we booked ourselves into the nearby Klaekken Hotel for most of our stay.



The historic Klaekken hotel is situated in a lovely park outside Hønefoss. In 1940 it burned down during the Norwegian resistance but was soon rebuilt. The new hotel was thereupon seized by the Nazis to use as a maternity home as part of its Lebensborn program (Heinrich Himmler's initiative whereby SS soldiers were encouraged to impregnate Norwegian women, who looked "Aryan"). Klaekken was one of 10 such facilities in Norway.

After the war, any involved Norwegian women were shunned in Norway along with their children. There is a small statue of a young girl sitting on a suitcase in the hotel front yard, memorializing the treatment of the women and children by the complicit Norwegian government.



The next morning, we met with Liv Christensen, our genealogist, who outlined our program for the next two days. We started nearby at Haug Kirke where **Michel Blyberg**, my 3rd great grandfather, was the sexton (klokker in Norwegian) for about a dozen years at the end of the 18th century. He had moved there from Christiana (Oslo).

I was very moved to see where he worked as well as the locations where the family lived. (One of the things that the sexton was responsible for was entering birth, death, marriage, and confirmations into the church books. It may be that Michel was the person writing the entries in the books that people now read.)



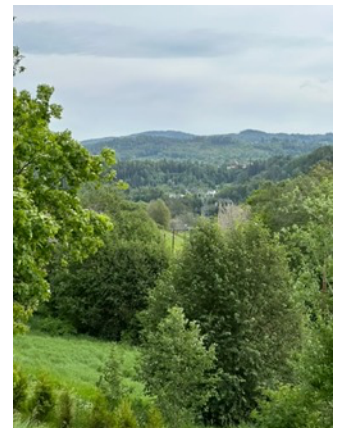
Michel also owned Klokke Saetang farm which was a little over two kilometers away. We visited the farm site, but after numerous consolidations and re-divisions there is no telling what specific piece of the property belonged to Michel's farm. There are, in fact, a number of farms, making up what is now called Saetang., The land is located on a gently sloping hill within sight of the church.

We talked to people who currently reside there, some still farming portions of it. We learned that when the Germans came through in 1940 there was stiff resistance in Hønefoss. Thereupon, the Germans advanced on many area farms with tanks, then burned down their buildings in retaliation.



We then went into Hønefoss proper. Liv first took us to Hønen, the once-elegant house on the former farm where my 2nd great grandmother **Anne Dorothea Lagesen** was raised. The Lagesens were a major family in the area, and Hønefoss gets its name from their farm and the waterfall (fossen) nearby.

Somewhat disappointing in this generally tasteful country, non-descript houses and apartments are now scattered across former farm fields, cramping the manor house, now within city limits. Hønen blessedly overlooks the stunning river valley and hills beyond. Sic transit gloria.





Hønen Farm had always been a significant farm in the area and records date back to the early 17th century. The Lagesen family was given a lease on the property in the mid 18th century and by 1802 had begun to buy out the owners. Anna Dorothea's father **Ole Lagesen** was one of the first merchants in Hønefoss. He operated a general store on what is now Lagesen Gate, where he started in business after receiving a grant in 1798. He was very enterprising and gradually acquired a considerable fortune. Anna Dorothea was one of his three daughters, and she married **Ole Blyberg** in 1812.

Ole Blyberg was likewise an impressively enterprising businessman. The trans-Norway road from Oslo to Bergen was built in 1791-1805, cutting through the Hønefoss area. Ole decided to buy Sundvolden, a farm and hotel now on the new road, to take advantage of the traffic between the Norways two major cities.



Ole owned the hotel and farm until his death in 1853. His wife, Anna Dorothea, sold it to their son, Johan, in 1854. Sundvolden passed on to Johan's son, Ole, who sold it in 1932. The hotel received visits from many famous people, including a lot of royalty. In fact, Ole received a letter from King Frederick, VI affirming his ownership of the property in June 1811.



As Ole was prospering with the hotel and farm, Anna Dorothea, ran a dry goods store in town, one of the Lagesen enterprises. The buildings from that period still stand in Hønefoss along the magnificent waterfall and river.





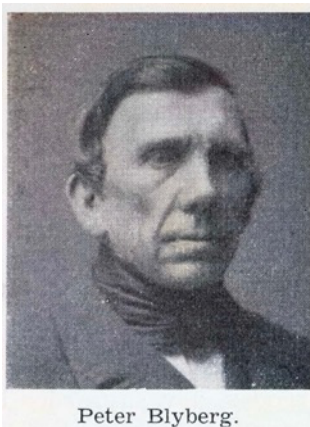
Ole and his wife, Anna Dorothea, are buried not far away at Hole Kirke. There are a number of other Blyberg family members buried in this churchyard.



It was at Sundvolden that my great grandfather, **Peter Blyberg**, was born in 1825. He would have grown up working on the farm and at the hotel. He decided to become a baker and operated a flour mill in town near the falls. At that time the various professions were controlled by guilds, so Peter had to go to Copenhagen to learn his trade and become qualified before he could set up shop.



(He left for Denmark on June 30, 1846, according to church records.) In addition to the mill, Peter owned property near the Falls, which became housing for workers at his mill and others' lumberyards. The street is called Blyberghaugen. Peter was very industrious and became deeply involved in the local commercial scene, including being a member of the local bank board and, at one point, Hønefoss' deputy mayor.



Peter Blyberg.

Peter Blyberg married **Anna Pauline Pjaaka** in 1858. Anna's family had a modest farm north of Sundvolden, in the hills above Steinsfjorden. My presumption is that Anna went to work at Sundvolden. (Since the farm was eight kilometers away, the only way to get there would have been by water, so Anna probably resided at Sundvolden during her employment.) Anna was 19 when she

married Peter, 33, in July 1858, pregnant with their first child, Anna Marie, who was born in October. Their 30-year-marriage lasted until Peter's death in 1888.

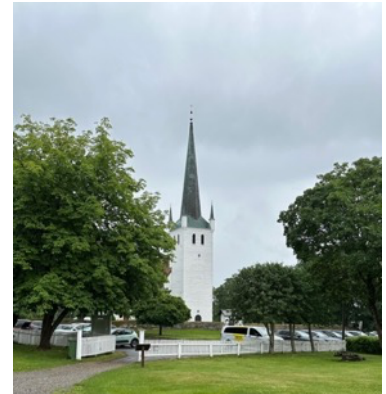


Pauline Blyberg,
f. Pjaaka.



We drove by the Pjaaka Farm, then stopped to see the nearby Kjerratstien Museum. The museum display, manned proudly by volunteers, documents a labor-intensive and highly unprofitable project to move logs throughout the hills to waterways that flowed south to Oslo. The Pjaaka farm was near one of the waterway stations, so farmhands likely manned that station to earn food or money.

Another lovely church we visited was Norderhov Kirke where Peter and Anna were married in 1858 (as were his parents, Ole and Anna Dorothea in 1812.)



The Norderhov Kirke Prestegard (priest's farm) featured a



large red building that would have housed the minister and his family, the farmer and family who worked the farm, as well as associated parish staff. The farmhouse, now the Ringerikes Museum, hosts an impressive display of period rooms and objects.

On our last night in the Hønefoss area, Linda and I stayed at the Sundvolden hotel in one of the original rooms which dates to the 17th century. We had dinner and breakfast in the historic dining area. It was very affecting to muse that several of our ancestors had been in those very rooms over the past 200 years.



On the morning of June 6, we visited a modest yet impressive site near Sundvolden where craftsmen were constructing a Viking ship using historic tools and methods. We would have liked to linger, but we had an appointment with a new cousin!

Through the dedicated work of our friends in Oslo, Anker and Trine Johnsen, we made a connection with a second cousin, once removed, **Karl Ivar Blyberg**. (Peter Blyberg and his wife Anne Pauline are our common ancestors.)



Karl Ivar and his wife, Kari Anne, graciously welcomed us with coffee and buns as we talked about his history and knowledge of our family. Their son, Anders Wilhelm Blyberg, now works the adjacent farm that has been in his family for over 100 years. He had to sell part of it to accommodate the new highway to Oslo airport as well as the Kistefos Museum. The family farm, Nordre Aslaksrud, is located at the entrance road leading down to the museum.



Kistefos, a private contemporary art museum and sculpture park that opened in 2019, is simply fabulous!

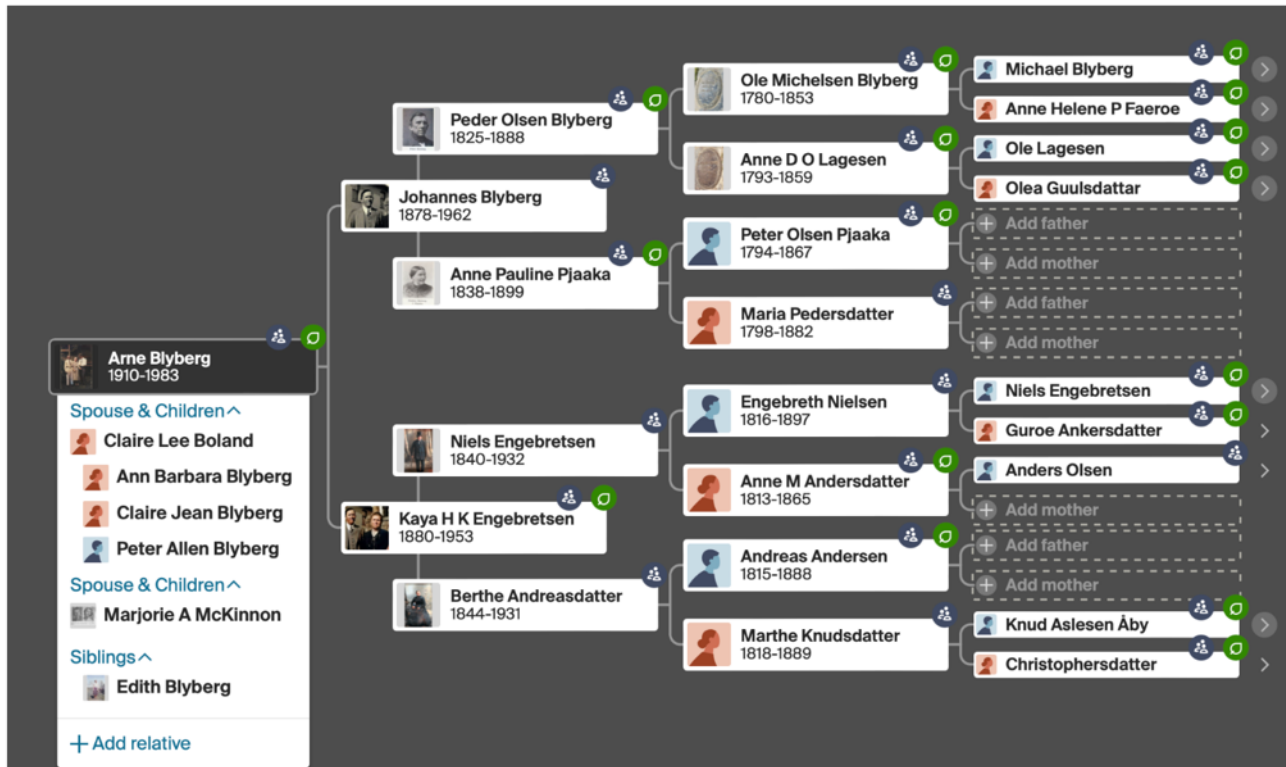


One of the highlights is the so-called “Twist” building spanning the river. You enter it as a vertical building and exit as a horizontal building.

A marvelous collection of outdoor sculptures are whimsically scattered around the dramatic property. Since it was such a lovely day, Linda and I gratefully absorbed our

surroundings. After a tasty picnic lunch on site, we drove to the Oslo airport to overnight. Then home!





For more information, go to ancestry.com and search the *Blyberg Family* tree I have compiled.

Or email me (peter@blyberg.net) and I'll send you the information.