

Old Photos

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Boxes of old memorabilia, letters, and photographs filled many spaces in my Grandmother's couple of rooms that were part of the house in which I grew up. We lived with my Grandmother in her house, also the house in which my mother grew up. There were items around that dated back before my birth and before my mother's childhood. I had a minor interest in some of them, but mostly they were like the wallpaper, just part of the surroundings. After my Grandmother died at age 95, my mother did nothing with Grandmother's belongings. When in her 90s my mother fell, broke a hip, and had to move out of her home; I was left to empty and sell the house.

Mom went through some of the old photos with me, and she told me what she recalled. I made a few notes when I could, but many were left unidentified when she died three years later. One photo was of a house in Norway with a woman sitting on a long stone front step. Another was a scene of an old farm. I had notes that said these were from my Grandmother's sister Anna whose family returned to Norway when her husband was ill. He died soon after. When they were adults, two of her children returned to the United States and one remained in Norway. She remarried and had another family. I never knew much about her except that she lived in Folldal Norway.

In 2015, while preparing for a trip with my three daughters to discover family sites in Norway and visit them, I Googled a farm name and found an internet link that had extensive genealogy for the Ringebu area from which my Grandmother had come. I found helpful information on the site and so sent these two photos to the webmaster asking if anyone knew anything about them.



To my astonishment, Tor, the webmaster, contacted Knut, the person who identified the farm by landmarks in the background. Knut contacted the owner and me. I got an email from Knut saying, “Your cousin wants you to contact him.” Knut gave me



contact information for Arild, a great-grandson of Anna’s. From Arild I learned that his mother, Maria, is Anna’s granddaughter, my second cousin, the same age as me, and she wants to meet me. She lives next to the house on the photo. This brought our trip alive; I was excited to meet these people.

On our trip, we met Knut and he led us to the local church and cemetery and to the family who showed us family graves. From there we all went to the house. Maria spoke no English, but her sister, son and his two teenagers spoke some English, and we were able to share stories. We entered the old house, and experienced the pristinely kept interior, similar to what it had been when Anna returned to Norway. I was stunned to see pictures hanging on the wall that were duplicates of photos I have, and I was able to confirm who was on them. And – as a special event and photo – we all sat on that same old stone front step.



I thank my grandmother for saving those old letters and photos, and for writing on them, and my mother who kept them. Without these prompts, I would be less curious, my past would be harder to trace, and these connections probably would not have happened. I am grateful to be able to pass on this history to my children and grandchildren and to theirs.