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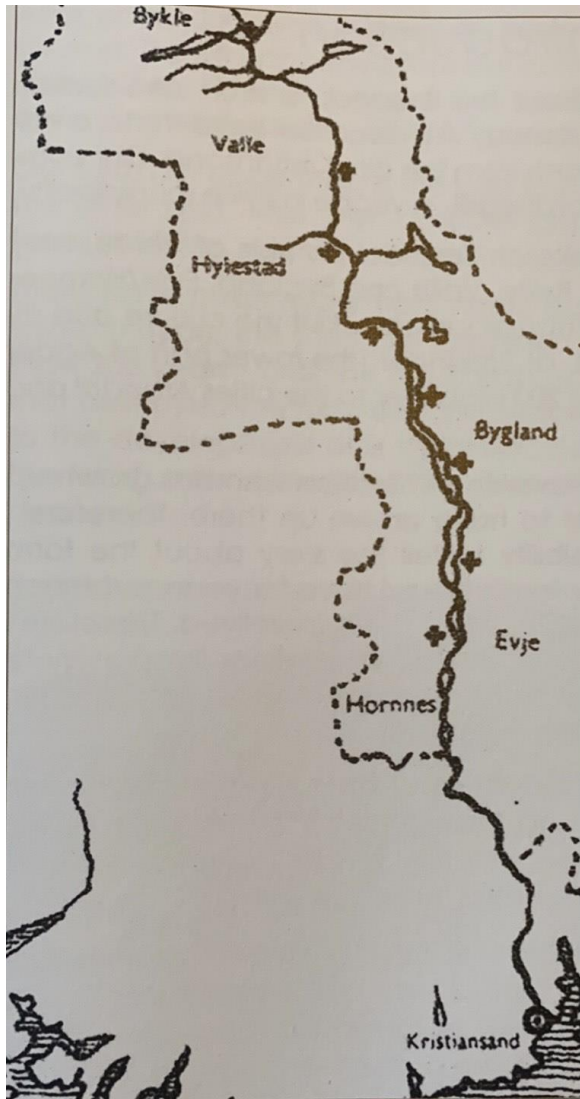
PRESENTATION

Hello everybody!

As a beginning of my presentation I will mention some facts: In the year 2000, in America there are estimated to be 4,5 million citizen with Norwegian ancestors. To put it in another way: In America there are as many citizen that originate from Norway as almost the whole population of Norway. From Setesdal, there was an immense immigration in the years between 1840's till about 1930s. Thus, there must be several tenthousands Americans with forfathers from Setesdal -

In this half an hour I will tell a little about Setesdal, its geography and culture and something about the emigration.. I will also have a presentation of my books about the topic.

At first I think it is useful to have a lesson in geography.



Geographically ,Setesdal is a 250 km long valley in southern part of Norway.
Setesdal is the upper part of the county "Agder"..

However, cultural speaking Setesdal consists of the municipalities Bykle, Valle and Bygland, may be Evje og Hornnes too,. In these municipalities there are a very special culture and tradition.



With their traditionell clothes they looked very differant to the people other places in Agder. Look at the skinlap on the back of the mail costume. They were often made fun when they come to the city because their apperience an dialect.

Untill the last part of 1800's the valley was very isolated. To go down the valley to the city Kristiansand, before 1878 people from Bykle, had to pass "The Bykle Ladder", a very difficilt and dangerous mountainpass.

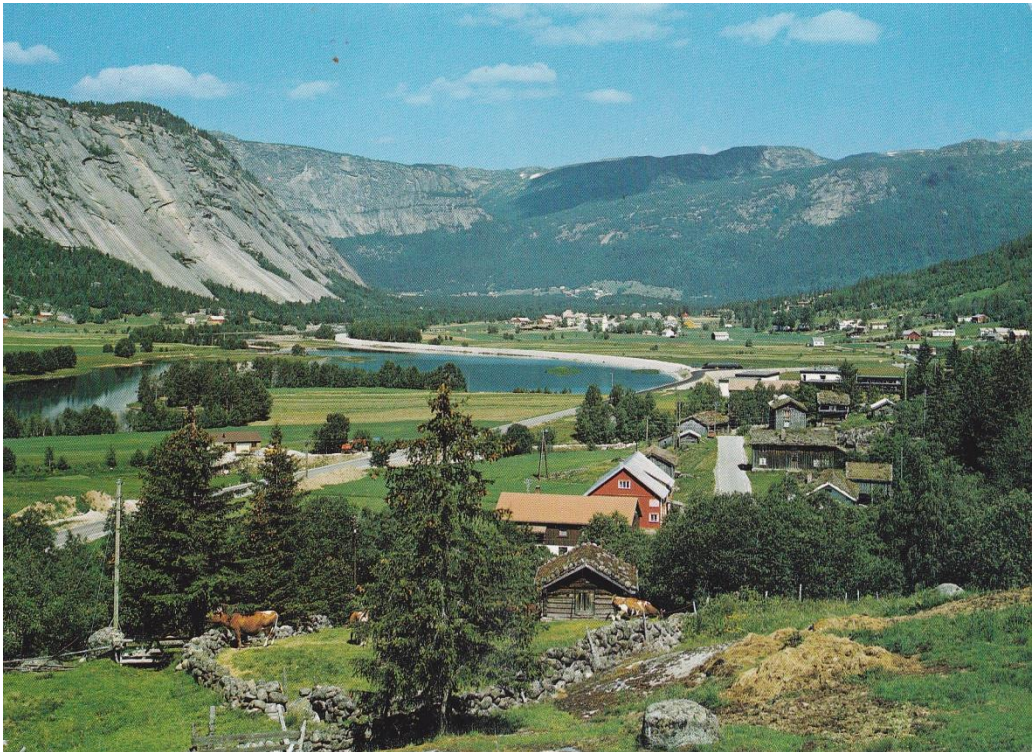


This means that the old way of living persisted in the valley longer than other places in Norway. A professor in history has claimed that The Middle Age in Setesdal lasted till the end of 1800s.



Norge — Mellem Valle og Bykle Sætersdalen

The people of Setesdal were famous to be very conservative in terms that they don't like change. Therefore Setesdal has been a "gold mine" for authors, painters and historians. In addition Setesdal has a distinguished music tradition that led up to last year when The Setesdal music came on the list of UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE. This is very special considered that the population of these three municipalities in Setesdal are only between 4 and 5 thousand. Bjørg Sissel will tell more about the music in Setesdal and Eldbjørg and Vetle will make a performance.



In spite of a common culture in Setesdal, the living condition back in time was different. In the lower part of the valley the farms were bigger and they had more forests, their living could be fairly good

This is from Valle. Here is landscape more friendly and soft and the farms bigger.

, In Bykle, on the top of Setesdal the living condition back in time were extremely difficult, in fact almost up my time. In the 1950s Bykle was

considered to be one of the poorest municipalities in Norway. As late as the beginning of 1900s it was not uncommon that people from



Bykle went down the valley to Valle and Bygland begging for food. They were allowed to do so, but they had to bring with them a certificate from the Police authority in Valle, saying that they were in need of it. If not, they had to pay a penalty or they had to serve some days in prison.

Today Bykle is among the most wealthy municipalities in Norway. This is mostly due to the fact that Bykle has a lot of waterpower.



This is a typical landscape in Bykle.

Most of the upper part of Setesdal consist of highland , just water, mountain and snow. Only a little part of the area are under the tree line, and the arable part is very small. Because of the height above the sea level, it is problems to grow, even barley. In Bykle in average each third year the crops were destroyed by frost. It became a little better when potatoes were introduced in end of 1700. In bad years people had to cross the high mountains to buy food.

. In former times this landscape was a symbol of poverty and how meager it was in Bykle. Now it is the opposite; now it is a symbol of prosperity as Bykle has enormous recourses of water that now are tamed into electricity production.

In addition, the fantastic mountain landscape attract tourists. Hovden the upper part of Bykle is now a famous tourist destination, especially in wintertime. The normal population in Bykle is about 950, but in high seasons there might be up to 20.000 people there.

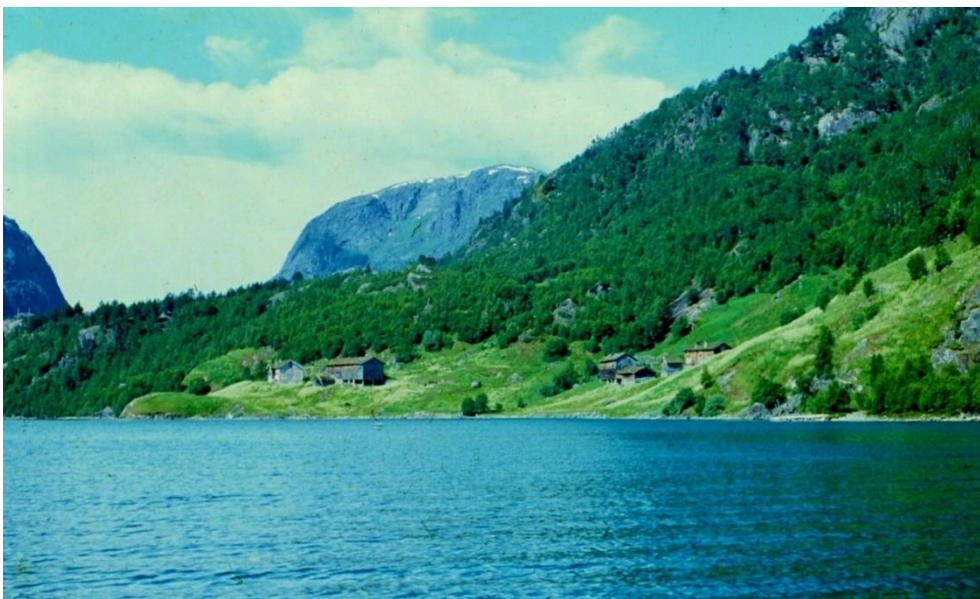


Now I will tell you something about Nordbygdi, the place where I grew up and where so many Americans moved from. Nordbygdi consist of scattered small farms around a long, narrow lake ,Bossvatn.



In the 1960s a dam was built that overflowed more than less all the farms. This picture is from the springtime last year. The snowmelting in the mountain hadn't started. My farm is now in the bottem of a water magazine. And the whole community is depopulated

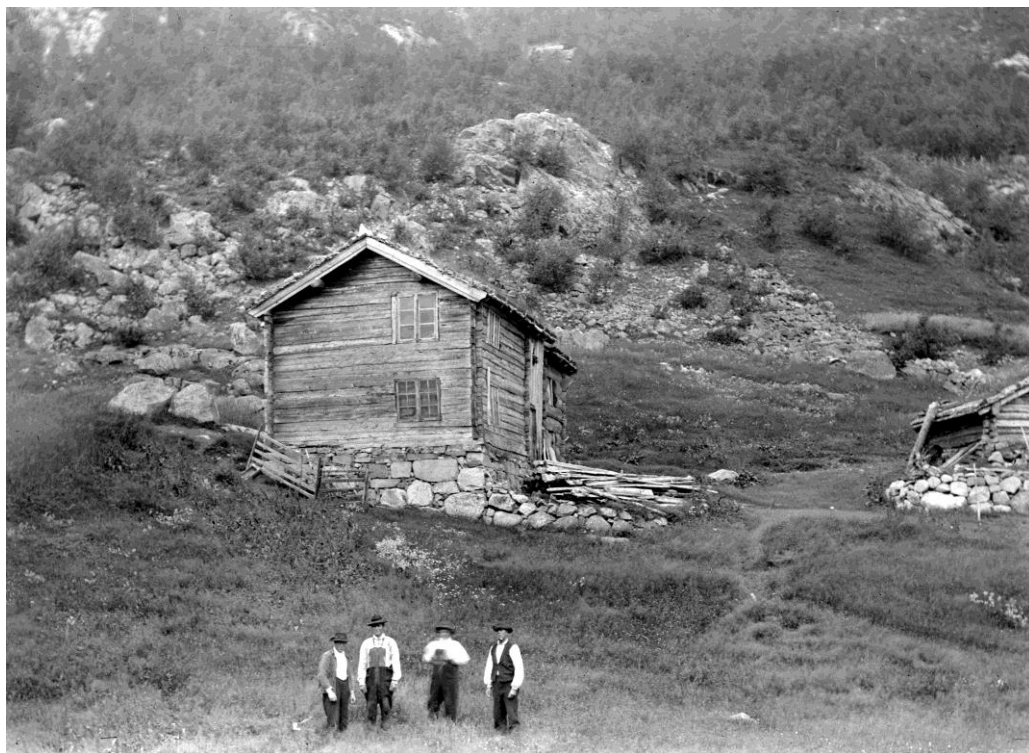




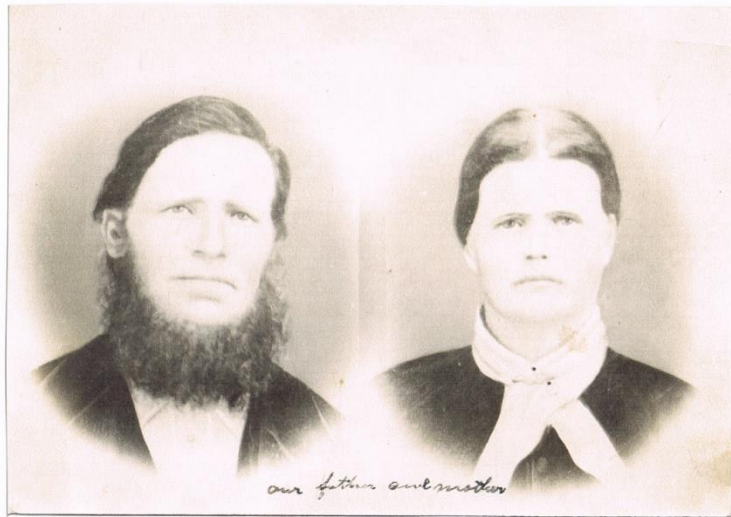
The farm to the left is where Ånund Brattland came from.

At the time of emigration to America, in Nordbygdi there were 15-20 such small farms and crofter farms around the lake. In 1950 the population was a bit more than 100.

From this community may be 120-130 people emigrated in the years between 1846 and 1930.



There the first emigrants from Bykle came from. In 1846 Ånund Brattland with his family and extended family left and settle down in Wisconsin. All together 10 people went together. Later a lot of people follow in their footsteps. They had a hard time the first years, but they were hardworking and competent people, and most of them did well.



This photograph is from one of the emigrant pair from Norbygdi. Unfortunately I don't know who they are. I got it near Grygla.



I will tell a story: In the 1930's one of the early emigrant came back to see his place of origin ,this man owned a lot of land in America. When he saw this little green spot above the water which was his former farm, he was so baffled that he could cover the sight of his farm with only the palm of his hand.

Some words about why people at this time emigrated in such a large- scale. Paradoxical ,during the 1800's Norway had a perode of economical deveopment. Then the child mortality decreased, then there were more mouths to feed. There were too small ressources compered with the increasing population., especially in districts like Setesdal where there was lack of arable land. If not the possibility of emigration to America has been possible, it could have ended with a social disaster with famina .



In order to find a living for as many as possible, already small farms were divided two and three times. Look at this place, Nesland where many emigrants came from, there aren't many acres of land, but this old farm has been divided four times. In the end the farms were too small to have a living from it. An average farm in Bykle could be about 5 acres. In addition there were a lot of crofter farms that were much smaller.

You might ask: How could people survive? The answer is hunting and catching, special reindeer and birds like grouse. This hunting culture is described very thoroughly in my books.



Another option was to cultivate new land. When you take a look on this landscape, you will understand how difficult it was.

I will tell a story about such a farm that illustrate how difficult the conditions were at that time. A such place is Skarberg that was cultivated about 200 years ago . On this mountain-shelf three generations tried to make their living



Ingebjørg , a sister of Ånund Bratteland, the leader of the very first emigration-group ,married a man from Valle 1822.. They had no land, and Ingebjørg asked her father about permission to cultivate this place in order to build up a farm for them. They cultivated all arable land, about an acre. Finally they could feed a little livestock, a cow and a few sheep and goats, but most of fodder they had to find in the forest.



The farmhouse is placed under a big stone to prevent snowslades destroying the house

It is told that they have to bind the smallest children to a birch to prevent them falling down into the lake. The first two families that was living there, lost most of their children small. Those who grew up emigrated to Red Lake County.in Minnesota

In the 1890s a new family bought Skarberg. They had 9 children ,believe it or not, and all them grew up



I will show you a photo of this brave family from 1904 . The same year 4 of their eldest sons emigrated to America . As many other from Bykle they settled down in Otter Tail County in Minnesota. This photograph they wanted to mail to their sons in Minnesota as a remember of The Old Country.



Most emigrants never returned back to Norway. This man was an exception. His name was Bjørgulv Nesland and he married my mother's sister.



He spent 7 years in N Dakota before and after 1930. These years he earned enough to buy some outlying fields. These fields he cultivated and built houses. In the end his place became, I would say, the most well run farm in Bykle. In one of my books I have written a short biography these heros.



At the end some words about my book project.

For a long time I have been interested in the emigration to America. During my upbringing in Nordbygdi, people often talked about relatives in America. Names like Grygla, Thief River Falls and Grand Forks , and even more The Red River Valley, were names everybody knew about

Like everyone else in Setesdal, I too have relatives in America. In fact, when I count the emigrants from all in my family who emigrated, it might be several thousands.

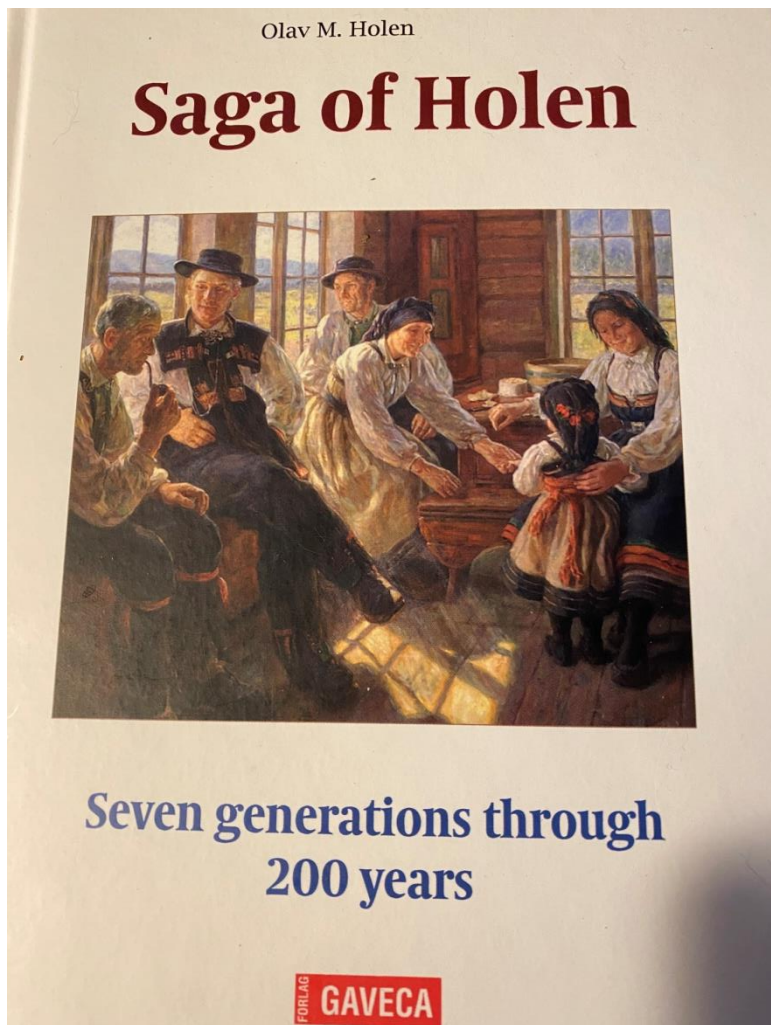
Gradually I got a great desire to see my relatives over there. In 2010 I and my eldest son visited my relatives in Goodridge, Pennington, and this was a marvellous experience to us. . The errand was partly to write the emigrant-story of Halvor Holen, a brother of my grandfather.

Two years ago I got contact with Tyler Holen, a relative of mine ,who was very interested in his Norwegian roots. He lives in Saint Hilaire in MN. He did a wonderful job helping me .He has proofread my manus and changed my poor English into a good American English.

In May last year I am Vetle and Eldbjørg were invited to come to MN and ND to perform the program we have today, but then Corona arrived making it impossible. I am very grateful that Gerhard found this way to meet you today .

The first book we made together was "Saga of Holen. Seven generations through 200 years". This is about our common family in the generations from the end 17th. Century and onwards..

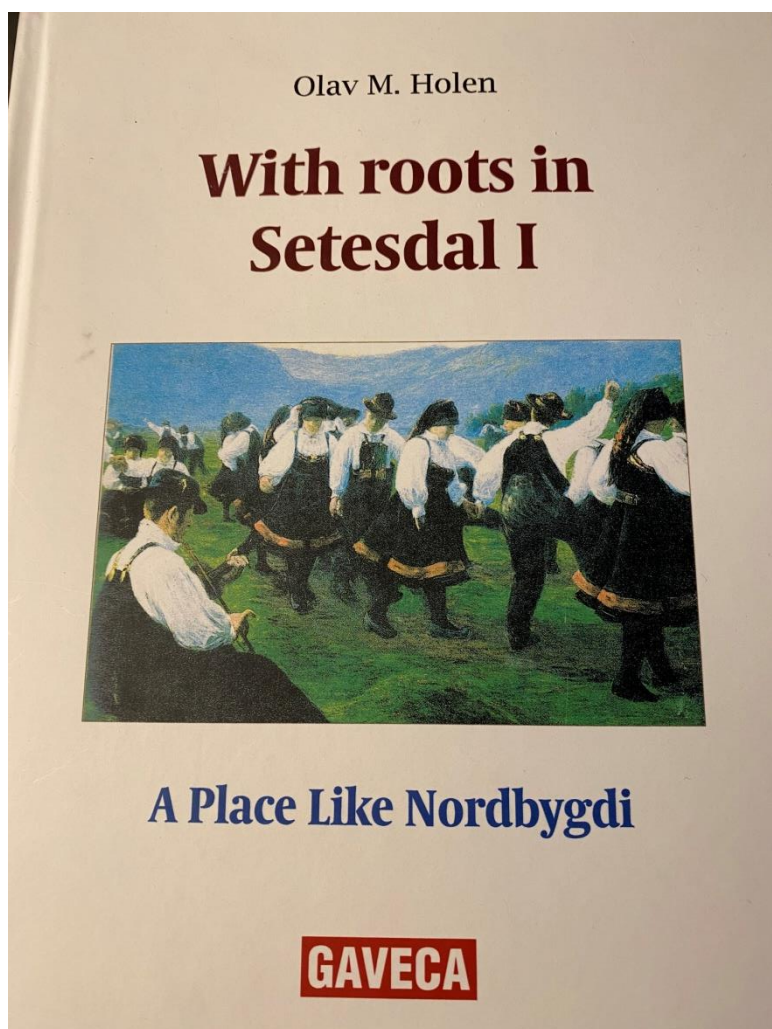
Then I decided to write about emigration from Setesdal to America, and about the society they left. The result was a two-volumed work with the tittle "With roots in Setesdal". The first book has the subtitle "A place like Nordbygdi", the other "They gave us a heritage".



The first part of "A place like Nordbygdi" is about Setesdal in general, its nature and culture. The second part is a presentation of Nordbygdi, a little community in Bykle. The reason for this option is twofold. This is my homeplace that I know as well as my own pockets. In addition, the

emigration from Bykle started there, and a large part of the people living there emigrated to America.

In this book are also some geneology of those people who emigrated, their familystory before emigration - and when possible -where they settled down in America ,and sometimes about the first generation there. As mentioned there are thousands of Americans originating just from this little place.

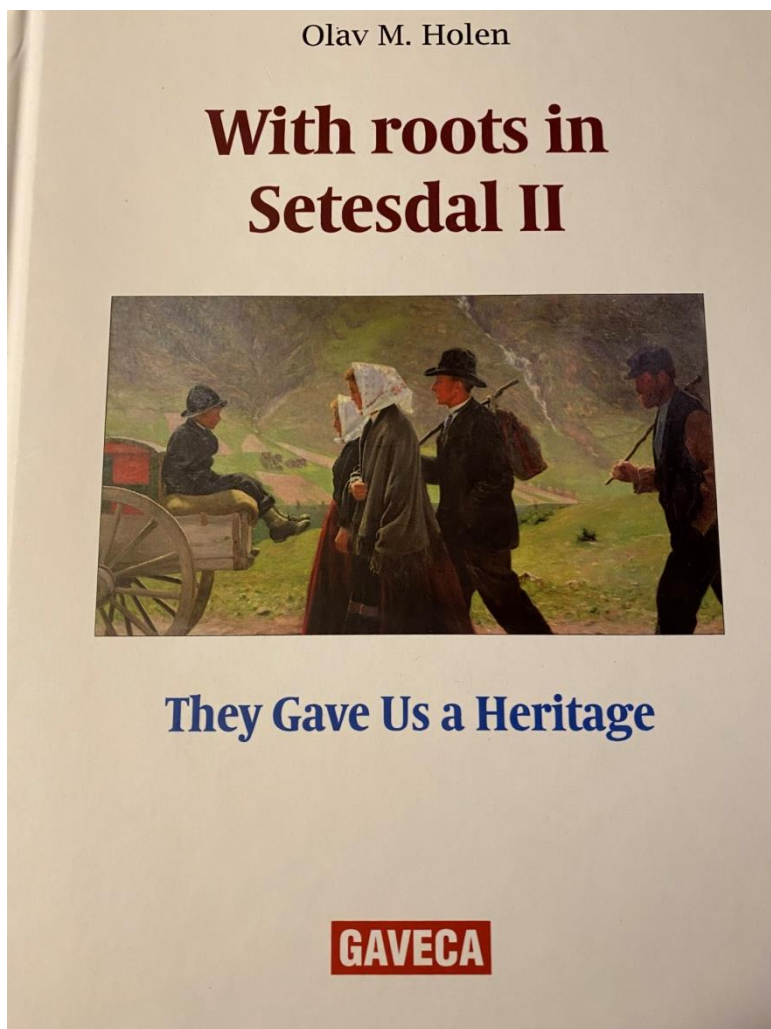


The Volume II, «They Gave Us a Heritage» is about the emigration in general and about the emigration from Setesdal especially.

The second part of the books consist of emigrationstories, all of them are from Nordbygdi.

The most interesting story is the story about the pioneer Ånund Brattland , the leader of the very first emigrant-group of 10 persons in 1846, that I have

mentioned before. I have access to much authentic materials written by descendants of the first emigrants. Combined with materials from other sources it became a exiting tale about these extremely strong and brave people. There are also an almost complete geneology of the first emigrants who left in 1846 and onwards to 1942. This means that many people in The Middle West will be able to trace their forefathers and get their biography.



I hope someone are interesting in finding their forefathers back in time. This might strenghten the relationship between the Americans and their relatives in "The old Country".

If someone want to go to Norway chasing their roots, I will happy to help making the tour successful.

