

England in the 17th and 18th centuries, along with Dutch, French and Swedish settlers. Large-scale, organized Norwegian immigration began with the arrival of 53 Quakers from Stavanger in 1825, who settled by Lake Ontario. In their wake, nearly 900,000 Norwegians relocated to the

United States. Per capita, this number of emigrants is second only

to Ireland.

home first.

Norwegians have always loved keeping records, and chances are good that you'll find the exact name, age and occupation of your Norwegian ancestors going back centuries. What happened to a person after he or she arrived in America, however, will not be

How do I track down my ancestors?

recorded in our archives. To trace your lineage, you will need the name and birthplace of a relative born in Norway. Typically, this will be the person in your family who originally came over. In other words, in order to fully utilize our Norwegian resources, you'll need to do a little research at

Once you have a name, there are several sources available through which you can track his or her lineage. An understanding of old Norwegian naming customs will make your search easier.

Norwegian names today are composed of a first and last name, as in other western countries, but in the 19th century, a name acted as

The typical 19th century Norwegian name would be composed of

an important clue to someone's place on the family tree.

three parts: The given name, the patronymic and the farm name. Let's take an example and break it down: Peder Johnsen Berg, a typical Norwegian farmer of the 1800s. Given names were normally of Northern European ori-gin, often

#### communicating who your father was. Consequently, Peder Johnsen is the son of John. His sister will

Vik, or some variant spelling, from then on.

Old Norwegian naming customs

necessarily related, they both just happened to have a father named Peter. People would also include a farm name. As with the patronymics, these were not names in the modern sense. They were more or less

an address. If you moved, the name changed. If Peder moved from the Berg farm to the Vik farm, he would be known as Peder Johnsen

An encyclopedia of Norwegian farm names, developed in the early 20th century, can be digitally accessed here: tinyurl.com/farmnames By the early 1900s, the old naming system was fading away due to industrial development and urbanization. Its fate was sealed in 1925. when hereditary family names were made mandatory. To this day,

baptisms, marriages and funerals. Today, these records (called kirkebøker: parish registers) are valuable first-hand genealogy sources. Surviving parish registers are kept by the National Archives' regional repositories (state archives). Most of these can be digitally accessed online: media.digitalarkivet.no/en/ A record covers a parish, its content ordered chronologically.

Beginning in the mid-1600s, Norwegian priests kept records of

In order to find a specific entry, you need to know where and approximately when the baptism, marriage or funeral took place.

What might the parish registers reveal? As many uneducated

of 1801, 1865, 1875, 1891, 1900 and 1910 are available online along with older lists of males back to 1664: www.arkivverket.no/ digitalarkivet What might the censuses reveal? A person's address at a given time, as well as the names of other people in the household and their

family relation. They often offer some clues on a person's birthplace or -date, which may help you to locate them in the church records.

The bygdebøker (literally "village books") are invaluable sources

Norway has held nationwide censuses on a regular basis. Censuses

records. Resources in the USA Ancestry.com (subscription site). Scanned and indexed ECLA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) church records - a large number of the Norwegian immigrants were Lutheran. These records

include both births/baptisms, marriages, confirmations and often

Findagrave.com. A resource for burial places in the USA, sometimes accompanied by obituaries or memorials of the deceased that

Familysearch.org (free). Indexed church records from Norway. These should be compared with the original scanned church records at arkivverket.no/digitalarkivet, as errors can occur in

Since 1882, The National Library of Norway has preserved copies of everything published in Norway: books, newspapers, magazines, photographs, phone books, train schedules and election fliers. Through donations from Norwegian-Americans, we also hold an extensive collection of books, magazines and leaflets produced by

Our collection is kept in secured vaults. For this reason, we recommend sending us an email at veiledningen@nb.no before

We aim to digitize our entire collection. For copyright reasons, newer material can only be accessed within Norway. Have a look at

## www.nb.no

the Norwegian communities in the USA.

### Looking for your Norwegian ancestors? Tracing your lineage is a fun and rewarding challenge that requires some basic knowledge of past centuries. This brochure from the National Library of Norway, the National Archives of Norway and DIS-Norge, the largest genealogy association in Norway, will walk you through the available resources and how to get the most out of them. Norwegian immigration to North America The very first Scandinavians in America were Leif Eriksson and his crew of 35 men and women, who wintered in Newfoundland around the year 1000 AD. Although accounts of the expedition were wellknown for centuries, they weren't archaeologically proven until the 1960s. Norwegians were also present during the early colonization of New

adjusted to suit local dialects. Also, spelling was not standardized, meaning that Peter, Petter, Peder or Per may very well be the same person recorded by different clerks.

The second name, the patronymic (Greek for "father's name"), is what most people associate with Nordic names today. These are the names that end in "-sen" or "-son", meaning "son of", thereby

be called Johnsdatter (John's daughter), and his son will be called Pedersen. Upon arrival in the States, this would commonly have been altered to Peterson. Two Petersons are therefore not

Practically all farm names were derived from a defining geographical feature. The most widespread names in Norway even today are Berg (mountain or outcropping), Haug (hillock), Hagen (outfield) and Dal (valley). Compound names, like Øvreberg (Upper Berg) or Djupdal (Deep Valley), continue to be common.

most Norwegian last names are patronymics or farm names from that period. Which records are available? When you have the name of a Norwegian-born ancestor to go on, quite a few sources can assist in your search for him or her - and

your lineage stretching further back in time.

**Parish registers** 

family.

Censuses

Bygdebøker

lists of the congregation.

provide a birthplace or -date.

indexed material.

visitina.

our website.

#### farmers did not know their own birthday, dates (and years!) of birth may vary widely in different sources. Therefore, by virtue of a priest's presence at important life events, parish registers are considered the most reliable sources of dates. They may also contain the names of people's parents and their homestead, and

even godparents or witnesses, revealing other branches of the

of Norwegian family history. Most were commissioned by the municipality and written by people with great local history knowledge. They may include a general history of the area or a compilation of extracts from church records and censuses, listing the owners and histories of farms in the area. Not all parts of Norway are covered by bygdebøker, and there are no exact equivalents for Norwegian cities. The National Library has a complete collection of bygdebøker. What might the village books reveal? If your ancestral farm is listed in a bygdebok, chances are you'll find the portion of your family tree that ran the farm - sometimes as far back as the first written

# The National Library

The National Archives of Norway (Arkivverket) are located in Oslo and in regional centres around Norway. We preserve archival material from state institutions as well as private ones and make

The National Archives

easily access censuses, parish records, emigrant lists, real estate registers, probate records, tax lists and other sources. Everyone is also welcome to visit us in person for advice about how to access material from the National Archives. www.arkivverket.no

the material available for public use. When using sources from the National Archives for family research, it's usually best to begin with the Digital Archives (arkivverket.no/digitalarkivet). Here users can

DIS-Norway DIS-Norge, The Genealogy Society of Norway, is the largest association for genealogists in Norway. DIS-Norge was founded in 1990 and its purpose is to create digital and local meeting places for anyone interested in family and personal history, to spread knowledge, and otherwise encourage conservation, documentation and dissemination of genus and personal stories. Our most

own members - and others who are looking for their ancestors.

famous database is Gravminner - the Norwegian name of the DIS Headstone database. Gravminner is an indispensable tool for all genealogists. It is a free service which DIS-Norway provides for our

www.disnorge.no