

## From Økland\* in Ølen\* to Iowa in US

After Inger Hansdtr. Froeland's brother, Niels (Nels), had emigrated to the US in 1887, his nephews followed by turns. Hans was first in [1908](#), and after the father Endre's death, Nils (Nels) went in [1913](#) and Johan (John) in [1914](#). Their half-brother, Endre, emigrated in [1896](#). But he died young.

Johan was first supposed to take over the family farm at Oekland, but as time went by, also he decided to leave for the US and join his brothers 'over there'.



Endre and Inger

The parents, Inger and Endre, died respectively in 1907 and in 1912. According to the church register Inger died of a kidney disease and Endre of cancer. Endre was born in Sauda 13<sup>th</sup> June 1844 and Inger in Vats in 14<sup>th</sup> December 1850. Sauda and Vats are old townships in Rogaland county of Norway.

Hans, Johan and Nils were the three youngest of a large family of 9 children. The two oldest, Inger and Endre, were born in Sauda. The other seven were born at Oekland in Oelen, at that time named Aalund. Until 2002 Oelen was a part of the neighbour county, Hordaland, but is now included in Rogaland.

The four oldest's mother was Martha Kvammen, also she was born in Sauda. She died in 1885. Endre then remarried Inger Hansdtr. Froeland in 1886. Inger was from the neighbor farm Froeland, next to Oekland. Endre and Inger's five children were Martha Eline (b. 1887), Agnete Johanne (1888), Hans (1890), Johan Emil (1892) and Nils (1896). Endre and Martha's first daughter, Inger, died as a little girl before the family came to Oekland about 1875.



Oekland today – the farm to the left is where Hans, Johan and Nils were born. The farm to the right is run today by descendants of Lars Brekke Oekland, a cousin to the tree boys. The family has now stayed at Oekland for more than 130 years.

The register of land for the farm number 85/2 in Fjelberg parish, Oekland, shows that Johan, after his father's death bought the farm for 1000 Norwegian kroner. Handing over a farm by auction was quite normal at that time. The auction deed was dated the 10. June 1913. For the trade he borrowed 2000 Norwegian kroner in *Arbeiderbruk og boligbanken*. The mortgage bond was registered the 5. august 1913.

We assume he needed the money to buy and renovate the farm, and maybe to pay the other heirs and heiress, among them the sister Martha Eline. But also perhaps to the brothers Hans and Nils, and the father's inheritance to

\* - The Norwegian national character Ø is normally written Oe in English, Aukland is an alternate spelling, but seldom used



Hans (behind), John (to the left) and Nels

The photo of the three brothers is taken in Minneapolis, Minnesota

half sisters Inger Marie and Inger Gurine. We assume half-brother Endre died before 1912. The sister Agnete died young, in the year 1900. Before sister Martha Eline married Hans Kristian Arnoe in the spring of 1916, she had already bought the building site at Vaaland in Stavanger, Hafsrfsjords street 54. So even if they were poor, some value must have been left after Endre and Inger. When Martha married Hans Arnoe, she managed a café in Stavanger.

But Johan changed his mind. Did his brothers call him, or was it quite lonely for a twenty one year old boy alone back at the home range? Certainly he had his cousin, the twenty years older Lars Brekke Oekland, at the neighbor farm. But nevertheless, in November 1913 he decided to sell the farm to another neighbor, Halvard Haugland, for 3000 Norwegian kroner.

About the spelling. Johan and Nils changed the spelling of their first names when they came to US. Johan to John and Nils to Nels. The Norwegian national character Ø in Økland was to O and Okland for Johan and Hans, and Oa and Oakland for Nils. None of them used Oe, which is the standard way to replace Ø. Uncle Niels Frøland spelled his name Nels Froland

As mentioned, the boys Endre and Hans had already gone to the US when their father died in April 1912. It was uncle Nels Froland who paid the travel for Hans, and it was uncle Nels that Hans was going to. At that time the uncle lived in [Cambridge, Iowa](#). Hans came to [New York 19<sup>th</sup> of Mars 1908](#). He had then 10 \$ in his pocket. Hans, and later his brother Nils, crossed the Atlantic Ocean in the [R.M.S. Adriatic](#). Hans from Southampton, Nels from Liverpool.

Uncle [Nels died the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 1910](#), two and a half year after Hans arrived US and Iowa. He was 53 years old, and he had several children; among them: [Hans, Anna Mary, Nellie, Henry and Beatrice](#). Uncle Nils married [Betsey Richardson](#). She died in 1905. In 1906 he remarried Ragnhild (Rachel) Helgevoll. Nels and Betsey had 9 kids, Nels and Rachel had 3.



Nils og Betsey Froland, 1892

The aim for Endre jr's travel was [Gardner i Illinois](#). Gardner is south west of Chicago. Endre came to Ellis Island in New York the [7<sup>th</sup> of Mars 1896](#). The steamer he followed was [S/S Lucania](#). His departure port in Europe was Liverpool in England. He died 1897.

Endre's three brothers went to Iowa, to the Huxley area in [Story County](#). Story County is in the central part of Iowa, and includes the city of Ames. John remained in this area, in Kelly (just south of Ames), on the land he named "Okland farm". Nels and Hans moved to northern Iowa to the area near Forest City.



**Hans**, born 27.08.1890, was educated as a Lutheran pastor. He was ordained on June 9, 1917 at the Union Convention of the Norwegian Lutheran Church at St. Paul, Minnesota. He served the following parishes:

- Kincaid, Sask., Canada 1917 - 1919
- Admiral, Sask., Canada 1919 - 1921
- Miller, Iowa 1922 - 1930
- Fertile, Iowa 1930 - 1944
- Mylo, North Dakota 1944 - 1947
- Vining, Minnesota 1947 - 1959

In 1957 Hans celebrated his fortieth anniversary as pastor in the ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. At the festival service in Vining Minnesota the 30th June 1957, participated his son Elmer, wife Julia and grandchild LaVonne.

Julia, born 06.12.1895, also had Norwegian roots. Her maiden name was Skogen. Hans and Julia married 1913.

From the US it is told that Hans was a funny cigar smoking minister; "He smoked a cigar constantly...." And he had a horse and a wagon which he always used wherever he was.

Hans and his brothers were born in the 1890s. At that time people in Norway were poor, and children were strictly brought up. Usually the family father was the undisputed head of the family. Norway at that time, was a strict and pietistic society. Children also were trained to early be responsible for their own lives. We have to know that to understand the history.

Like his father, Hans's son Elmer Norman Okland was also a minister. In retrospect people have asked about Hans had a finger in the pie when Elmer made his choice of career, and when he chose to marry Lorene? A career Elmer later left, and a marriage he broke out of. Hans' Norwegian inheritance appear clearly in the story where he saw Edward (the kid they raised) kiss a girl and thought he'd better marry her. So attitudes have changed a little since those days.



Hans, Julia and Elmer in 1915

Hans was not all strict though. The surroundings enjoyed listening to him talking and laughing, and smoking a cigar. Julia would call him "Okland" and he would call her "Mama". So the old Norwegian manner of speaking followed the emigrants.

From 1940 to 1945 Elmer served in [Laketown Lutheran Church](#) in Wisconsin. For a short time in 1945/46 he was a navy chaplain. We can also read many nice things about him and his work in [The First Lutheran Church](#) in New Richmond, Wisconsin. He stayed there from October 1946 to July 1955. Then he moved to Park Forest in Illinois. This is where his career as a minister came to an end. He divorced Lorene. Her last years were marked by depression, and she died in a fire in April 1962. Elmer remarried Shirley Pentridge, and his professional career turned to be an insurance agent for the Lutheran Brotherhood. Lutheran Brotherhood helps its members achieve financial security in the context of faith, values, and finances. It serves the Lutheran community as a resource for financial education, character outreach, and volunteer services. They offer their members a variety of insurance and investment products.



Hans and a confirmand group,  
Sask Canada, Ca 1920

Another story about Hans is told of people who were close to him, a story that tells us something about the time and the people hundred years ago. It was outside Rake, in northern Iowa, and Hans was on his way home with his horse and wagon when he "encountered the devil" in the shape of a dog. The dog is reported to have said: "I'm going to persecute you as long as you live". And Hans replied: "I know it" and he was very scared. People still clearly remember the story, so it must have been something Hans repeated many times. It happened before he married Julia, and it made a mighty impression on Hans. It was like a prophesy. Afterwards people have

related Elmer's choice – to give up the benefice - as a part of that "persecution"?

Hans never returned to Norway, not even to visit. He died in 1973 and he is buried in Rake, at the [West Lutheran Cemetery](#), in Winnebago County, Iowa. [Hans' obit.](#)



John and Edith

**John**, born 29.10.1892, married Edith Johnson. She was born in NW Iowa, 10.02.1894, but lived and worked in Des Moines when John met her. She had a sister, Margaret Birkestrand, in the Huxley area, and came there to visit often. John and Edith married 11.03.1923.

But before that. When John came to US in 1914 he soon had to go back to Europe to participate in world war one. He was in France.

John continued farming when he came over to the US. He farmed near Huxley. First as hired, but in 1932 he bought his own land, the Okland farm in the Kelley area in central Iowa. He did well and bought some more farm land there. He especially liked raising beef cattle. After teaching school for a few years, Edit moved to Des Moines, Iowa as she got a job at Standard Oil.

Their oldest son Kenneth took over the farming when John retired. Kenneth married Margaret Ackermann and now their three sons farm the home farm. Kenneth and Margaret were in Norway visiting in the mid 60s, and maybe later as well. Kenneth died in 2005 of Parkinson disease.

Today the Okland farm feeds three families. They farm 3300 acres of land. The brothers Ken, John and Tim Okland all have their income from the farm.

Also Kenneth's two brothers Leo and Marlow farmed in Iowa. The same did their sister Lois and her husband Gordon. Marlowe farmed first with his father in Kelley, but after a while he bought his own farm north for Kelley. Marlowe also taught at the G.I. Farm School here. At the age of 48 he got a strong stroke.

Leo farmed in Jewell, Iowa. But after some years he sold the farm and moved to Ames where he worked as a computer operator at Iowa Department of Transportation.

Gordon and Lois's farm was at Stanhope, Iowa, ca 3 miles north of Kelley. Their youngest son, Randy, runs the farm today.



John visited Norway in 1961 – here at Oekland, at the farm of his cousin Lars Brekke Oekland's son Amund, and with John's grand-nephew Torgeir in the heyload

John visited Norway twice, first in the early fifties, 1952, and a second time in 1961. In 1952 his son Stanley come with John. A picture from his last visit you will find in the country book for the Oelen area. Other of John's children also have visited Norway.



John and Edith's grave site. Down to the right you will see the plaque for John's attendance in World War one.

We presume there have been many great moments at the Okland farm during the century since John came to Kelley. Maybe [this](#) is one of them.

John died in 1971 and he is buried at Fjelberg cemetery in Kelley, Iowa – the emigrants brought much of Norway with them to the US, or 'over there' as we say in Norway – many toponyms were brought over. John's wife Edith is also buried here.

[John and Edith's obits.](#)

Okland farm 2008:



Planting corn



From Okland farm in Kelly today



Norwegian visitors at the Oklands



Nels was only 16 years when he left Olen and Norway

**Nels** left Norway via [Stavanger 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1913](#). He notified the authorities in Olen about the emigration three weeks earlier. Fifteen days after the outward voyage, he arrived US, New York and [Ellis Island](#), 18<sup>th</sup> April 1913. However, it took more than 17 years before he was an American subject the 10<sup>th</sup> November 1930.

Before he was an American citizen in 1930, Nels married Ruth Johnson born 27. Nov. 1909, in Huxley, Iowa. The couple were joined in marriage by brother Hans on Christmas Eve 1929 in Miller Lutheran church, Iowa.



Nels and Ruth about 1960

Brother Hans gave Nels a hint about a farm for rent close to Fertile north in Iowa. Nels, Ruth and their few months old daughter Norma moved in 1931 from the Huxley area to the farm south west of Fertile, Cerro Gordo, Iowa. Nels rented the farm for 8 years, and here were the three other daughters to Ruth and Nels born.

For a while, from 1939 to 1943, they run "The Gunderson farm" before Nels the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1943 bought the farm they first rented in Fertile. Here Ruth and Nels lived until they died, and from here all the girls graduated from Fertile High School. The farm was sold in 1997, after Ruth's death.

The Oakland's were life long members of the Lutheran Fertile church, where Ruth was organist and pianist, and Nels sat with two daughters on each side.

Ruth and Nels's family in 1943:



In front from left: Ruth, Marcelline, Nels. Behind: Emelia, Iva-Dell, Norma

The family were musical and the three girls Norma, Iva-Dell and Marcie established "The Oakland trio", and Emelia was the family's country singer and player.

Norma song in chorus all her life. She started singing in weddings when she studies at the high school. She played piano, served as an accompanist at school and church, and played for church services for many years.

Norma was the only daughter who continued farming after she married. She and her husband Sterling had all their lives a farm north of Meservey, close to Mason City, Cerro Gordo, Iowa. Norma was graduated from Waldorf College, and practiced as teacher in Meservey beside the farming. Also the youngest daughter, Marcelline was educated teacher. She taught most of her working life in Nevada, Iowa; 35 years of totally 42 in the educational system.



The farm to Nels and Ruth, 2008



... and circa 50 years ago



Fertile Lutheran church anno 2008

Nels also visited his homeland and relatives here once, in 1958. And his daughter Marcelline visited in 1959. Emelia and her husband Robert visited Norway the summer of 1982.



Nils og Ruths gravstein på Brush Point kirkegården, nær Fertile

Nels died in 27<sup>th</sup> April 1964. Some time earlier he was attacked by a sow and hurt his kidney badly. After a while he developed cancer. Ruth died 17<sup>th</sup> January 1996. They had 12 grandchildren and when Ruth died: 32 great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren.

Here is a list of the [dead with surname Okland registered in Story County](#). Not all of them are relatives.

## Descendants to Hans, John and Nels.

Date formats dd.mm.yyyy, month yyyy or yyyy.

**Hans and Julia** had one son and one foster-son:

- Elmer Norman b. 07.06.1914, Thompson, Iowa, died Rockford, Illinois, 17.09.1981, Married (1): 1935 Lorene Johnson b. 1916, Lorene died in a fire April 1962, Two children:
  - LaVonne b. 25.03.1936, d. November. 2006, To daughters Susan b. 1960 and Margaret b. 1962 Married (1): John Boykin, b. 1932, d. 1979

Married (2): 03.08.1985 Henry G Castle, b. 1923, d. 2003

- Stephen, b. 03.07.1942, d. 05.06.2004. Married Dorothy (Dottie) Susan Wray  
Children:
  - Steve Douglas Jr. b. 1964, married to Terri McDonald,  
children:
    - ✓ Nicki,
    - ✓ Tyler,
    - ✓ Michaela
  - Scott Michael b. 1966, married to Kim Moore,  
children:
    - ✓ Twin boys Bryan and Brandon,
    - ✓ Cassie
  - Sean David b. 1971, married to Gloria Clark,  
children:
    - ✓ Madison Grace b. 2002,
    - ✓ Savannah Jordan b. 2004

Obit [Stephen](#)

Married(2) 1958 Shirley Pentridge b. 15.06.1924, one child:

- Mark b. 15.03.1966, married Diane Ralph,  
Children:
  - Shannon,
  - Brigit

Shirley had a son Bob Steidel, b. 24.11.1953, from a former marriage.

- Edward Husome (foster-son), lived with his grandmother until he was ca 11 years old.

**John and Edith** had six children:

- Kenneth, born 27.03.1926, died 23.09.2005 – married Margaret Ackermann  
Kenneth and Margaret's children:
  - Kenny, b. 14.08.1952 – married Janette – live in Kelley, parents to
    - Jerrod b. 1980
    - Mindy b. 26.04.1982
  - Linda – married Kevin Larsson – live in Story City
  - John – married Glenda – live in Kelley
  - Tim, b. 20.10.1958 – lives in Kelley

Obituary to [Kenneth Okland](#)

- Marlow, born 07.07.1927, died 01.11.1987 - married Carol Walters. They have 4 daughters:
  - Marlene b. 02.10.1953; d. January 1994 by breast cancer, married Paul Kirstein Sept. 1972. Two daughters:
    - Jennifer

- Jill
- Debra b. 15.11.1954; married Richard Schulte 1976 - 1987; Three children:
  - John
  - Joseph
  - Jenna

Debra married Thorne Hacker in 2002

- Sharon born 27.08.1956; was married with Dan Ackerman 1987. One daughter:
  - Leah
- Karen b. 27.08.1956; married Mervin Carnahan; two daughters:
  - Nichole
  - Alisha

Marlowe died of a stroke, he had his stroke at the age of 48, then he lived several years totally disabled.

- Stanley, b. 26.10.1928 – Stanley is single.

Stanley was got hard hurted in a traffic accident in 1987, he now at Iowa Veterans Home in Marshalltown, Marshall, Iowa.

- Leo, born 10.07.1930 in Des Moines, died 01.02.2002 - married Rita Willard. Leo and Rita have 3 children:
  - Laura Moreland, of Ames
  - Lynn Newell, of Cottage Grove, Minnesota
  - Lee Okland, of Elkhart

Married (2) Norma Lodestein 27.12.1977.

Leo developed Alzheimers disease, so he did not enjoy life his last several years. As his parents he is burried in Fjeldberg Church Cemetery in Huxley.

When he died Leo had six grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Obit: [Leo Okland](#)

- Lois, b.11.06.1933 – married Gordon Hove, 21.11.1953  
They have two sons in Iowa:
  - Gary – married Roxanne Johnson of Randall, Iowa, they have two daughetrts:
    - Amy – married Brad Stoermer. Two daughters:
      - ✓ Ashlyn, b. 2004
      - ✓ Halle, b. 2007
    - Tracy – was married with Jay Brandner. Two sons:
      - ✓ Dylan, b. 2002,
      - ✓ Keatyn, b. 2004
  - Randy – married Marcia Frette of Jewell, Iowa. Two sons:
    - Brandon
    - Garrett

Recently Gordon and Lois lives most of the year in Mesa Arizona.

- Dorothy, born 01.01.1935 – married Ken Burger

John and Edith's grandchildren, ca 1960:



**Nils and Ruth** had four children:

- Norma, b. 26.06.1931, d. 30.01.2006 – married 23.09.1952 Sterling Sprau, Mason City -  
Their children:
  - Kurt f. 13.11.1963, Mason City, died 01.09.2005, Osage Iowa. Children:
    - Amanda
    - Casey
    - Sterling
  - Pam – m. Bob Carlson, Meservey, children:
    - Becky,
    - Zach,
    - Toby
  - Scott – m. Jenee, Meservey, children
    - Anna (Joe) Dunn-wald,
    - Abby

Obit [Norma](#) Sterling [Kurt](#)

- Emelia Irene, born 22.02.1932, died 02.03.1996 - married 20.10.1950 Robert Henry Pederson, Nora Springs, b. 14.10.1929, d. 24.11.1997 –  
Their children:
  - Robert E. "Hutch" b. 26.06.1951 – m. Brenda of Cornell,
  - Bradley b.17.04.1953 – m. Sue of Mason City,
  - Brian b.30.10.1954 – m. Vicki of Nora Springs,
  - Jane b. 03.10.1956 – m. Patrick O'Rourke - Fort Dodge.

Emelia and Robert were married in the Fertile Lutheran Church. Minister was uncle Hans, Rev. Hans Okland. The couple resided in Nora Springs in 1960. Emelias and Roberts 12 grandchildren + 3 great-grandchildren in 1996:

Grandchildren: Kristin Pederson, Teresa Coats, Ryan O'Rourke, Brodie Pederson, Cassie Pederson, Andrea O'Rourke, Emily Pederson, B.J. Pederson, Chrissy Pederson, Callie Pederson, Sam Pederson and Mila O'Rourke;

Great-grandchildren: Rhett Pederson, Dakota Coats and Ty Coats.

Obit [Emelia](#) [Robert](#)

- Iva-Dell, born 20.04.1933 - married Bill Wright, Jewell – five children
- Marcelline, born 28.10.1936, married 22.08.1964 Bob Osmundson, Radcliffe;