The Norwegian crofter:
The emergence, living conditions, and disappearance of a rural underclass 1800-1930

by

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Preface

I grew up on a farm in the small farming and forestry community of Aremark, located in the southeastern part of Norway. When I was a child in the 1970s I discovered that there had been another house on our property by the edge of the forest. Not much was left of it; a few large rocks that had been part of the foundation, an apple tree, a few rose bushes and some perennial plants. I was told it used to be an old *husmannsplass* – a crofter's holding. At our neighbor's farm there were still two crofter's holdings left standing, tucked away in a glen. The *husmenn*, or crofters, who had once lived there had moved away, and I remember playing in these deserted houses. They were small and modest with a kitchen, living room, and a bedroom and had no modern amenities like plumbing and electricity. There were abandoned crofter's holdings throughout Aremark, slowly crumbling, becoming overgrown, and fading away. The crofters were long gone.

I earned my B.A. from Luther College in 1991. My major was anthropology with an emphasis on cultural anthropology. Dr. Harvey Klevar, my advisor and major professor was a big inspiration for my fellow students and me. He challenged us to 'think outside the box' and to view groups of people from the 'inside' rather than from the 'outside'. Less weight was put on specific dates and individuals, and more importance was put on trends and groups of people, feelings and traditions, physical conditions and location, and general time periods. He taught me the value of stepping back to see the whole tapestry rather than over focusing on each individual stitch.

I started my quest for a deeper understanding of the Norwegian crofter class during my graduate studies in the History Department at Iowa State University in 1996. I had taken seminars with my major professor, Dr. Andrejs Plakans, dealing with 19th and 20th Century European agricultural history. Through his seminars my focus was drawn to the peasant class throughout Europe. I gained a passion and predilection for the peasants who were the flesh and blood of the countries and cultures that were controlled and ruled by a select few of the upper classes.

With a solid foundation where the cornerstones were Dr. Klevar's philosophy of viewing past and present communities and cultures, Dr. Plakans' substantial and impressive work and understanding of the European peasants, my own love and keen interest in agriculture and agricultural communities, and the History Department at Iowa State University and its Agricultural History program, the natural choice for a thesis theme was the Norwegian crofters. I sought to expand my knowledge and understanding of the last peasant group of Norway I had seen the fading imprints of when I was a child.

My research of this project started at the Parks Library at Iowa State University and expanded to the Drake University Library, the library at the University of Oslo, Norway, the Halden Library in Halden, Norway and the Trøgstad Library in Trøgstad, Norway. With the steady increase of sources available on the World Wide Web, I was able to view and download an extensive amount of statistics from Statistisk Sentralbyrå and articles and information about the crofters from both official and private sources. It was through the Internet that I discovered the history association *Tirsdagsklubben*, the Tuesday Club, which had collected a large amount

of historical documents and oral history about their rural community Trøgstad in Østfold. The members had recorded a complete listing of all the crofter holdings in the area and had included many personal accounts and information about several of the crofters. I had the great pleasure of meeting with them at the Trøgstad library during the summer of 1996. They granted me full access to their written records (all are unpublished), and spent several hours listening to stories and oral history about crofters and farmers during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. *Tirsdagsklubben* gave me the personal insight and cultural background I had become to seek and value when exploring our history.

Today, almost a decade later, I have finally reached the end of my research project. Having drifted away from my mission for many years, I returned to Iowa State University in 2004. The History Department and Dr. Plakans welcomed me back and gave me the opportunity to finish what I had started so many years ago. Dr. Plakans has served as a mentor and guide and pointed me in the right direction when I needed it. He also serves as the Major Professor of my Program of Study Committee. I thank him for his extreme patience and having been a key source for my ultimate success.

I would also like to thank Dr. Klevar for his inspiration and influence during my years at Luther College. His wisdom continues to serve as a guide to my understanding of people and their cultures, past and present.

A genuine "tusen takk" is extended to all the members of *Tirsdagsklubben* who gave me the sources required to give this thesis a human face. I hope the interview they conducted with Arnt Høgås gives you, the reader, as much insight to

the Norwegian crofters as it gave me. Oral history is so important – especially today when written inter-personal communication like letters and other documents are becoming more technical with e-mails, instant messages, and text messages that are often erased, hence un-recordable, and impossible for future historians to view.

Thank you to the other members of my Program of Study Committee: Dr. Kenneth G. Madison, Dr. Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, and Dr. Robert P. Lasley.

Dr. Sølvi Sogner at Historisk Institutt at the University of Oslo supplied a list of sources dealing with agricultural history of Norway as well as the Norwegian crofters. Tusen takk for hjelpen!

Hans and Ingrid, my two children have been very patient with me this past year, and have allowed me to work without interruption when I have needed it. Thank you both for being such wonderful and great kids !

John, who supported me when I started this project nine years ago: Thanks for keeping encouraging me to finish this thesis.

Richard, my dear husband – thanks for being the one who kept telling me I could actually do this. Your help, support, and belief in me are of great importance. Thank you!

Figure 1. Norway

Map of Norway

Chapter 1: Introduction

In Norway from 1800-1930 an agrarian underclass culture of workers known as crofters grew, flourished, declined, and disappeared. This thesis will explore the history of crofter culture, the reasons for its growth and demise and its place in the broader pattern of changes occurring in Norwegian agriculture, technology and culture. The main focus of this thesis will be the demise of the crofter culture and the conclusions proposed herein are as follows:

Throughout the nineteenth century old farm tools were gradually being replaced by mechanized farm machinery like iron plated plows and harvesters. This made agriculture more efficient and slowly replaced the need for physical manpower. The new machinery also allowed for clearing of previously unused land areas for agricultural use. The farmers were now able to use all their land, including the land the crofters had utilized, more efficiently and for their own benefit. The new machinery replaced the need for crofters and played a vital role in both the disappearance of the crofter class and the crofter holdings.

The emphasis on grain crops started to diminish after 1850 and a change in agricultural products was seen. An increased interest in husbandry both for meat and milk production increased the need for pastureland and hence contributed to the decreased need for manpower for grain farming.

Norway had been self-sufficient in most agricultural products until the 1860s when grains from both North America and the regions around The Black Sea became far more cost-effective, hence changing the traditional trading pattern. A

number of factories started to emerge around 1870 that used Norwegian raw materials like fish and timber for products that were exported to foreign countries. This shift from a primary type of economy (agriculture) to a secondary type of economy (manufacturing) brought a shift of manpower from the rural areas to the industrialized urban centers.

The industrial environment of the early 1800s changed from being dominated by small companies whose labor was mainly manual and time-consuming to a new, modernized industry which had machines that were able to mass-produce products. The initial textile mills were followed by the development of the iron- and metal-industries. Norway's merchant fleet also increased drastically from 1850 to 1880. Increasingly more and more jobs were created due to industrialization. Many agricultural workers chose a life working in factories rather than becoming crofters.

The promise of a better life, mainly in America, convinced many of the crofters to emigrate and to seek their fortune as pioneers. The population in Norway was growing faster than the country was able to sustain. As the need for the crofters diminished on the farms, the crofters had to turn elsewhere for employment. The cities did not have enough new jobs to offer this newly emerged labor class, as the industrial community itself was in its infancy. Therefore, emigration reduced the number of crofters and was a contributing factor for the disappearance of the crofter culture.

A revolutionary wave that demanded social reform swept across Europe during February of 1848. It inspired Marcus Thrane, Norway's first true socialist, to fight for social reform in Norway. His beliefs in 'the right to work', 'the right to

ownership of property', and 'the right to credit' appealed greatly to the crofters and the emerging worker class. Thrane's efforts helped pave the way for a smoother transition for the declining crofter class to the growing labor class.

The right of landownership was an idea that spread like wildfire through Europe during the nineteenth century. The crofters became more educated thanks to social reformers like Marcus Thrane, did not tolerate their lower social status, and demanded equality and the right of landownership. Eventually, the government of Norway passed a land reform act, the Land Act of 1928, that included a paragraph that gave the crofters the right to purchase their land and become independent freeholders. By 1930 the Norwegian crofter culture had slowly disappeared as a result of Norway's shift from being a primarily agricultural society to becoming a modern, industrial nation.

It is important to have a clear understanding of who the crofters were. I have included a general description of definitions of the vocabulary of Norwegian social records at the end of this chapter. The next chapter gives an overview of how the crofters became a distinct social group, when and how they had an impact on the Norwegian society, and how it was to be a crofter. The following chapters will then systematically and chronologically discuss the events and changes of nineteenth-century Norway as they occurred, and how they impacted the elimination of the crofter class.

Typology of Norwegian Peasant Society

When going through old Norwegian public records dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as church registries and census materials, there is a

magnitude of descriptions and phrases (in the 1801 census as many as 40,000) describing an individual's social and economical position. Some of these classifications are '*Selveier*', '*Leielending*', '*husmann*' or '*husmand*', '*innerst*' or '*inderst,*' all which are tied to positions in agriculture. What are the definitions and realities of these descriptions? To have a basic understanding of these social descriptions they should be viewed in the intellectual context offered in this thesis.

Many Norwegian citizens were placed in one of the above agricultural classifications, but not all individuals fit into one of these agrarian categories. Some were classified as ship captains, merchants, teachers, clergy, blacksmiths, shoemakers, soldiers, state functionaries, local functionaries etc. It was not uncommon that an individual had more than one classification. A 'Selveier' could also be classified as a functionary or a merchant and a 'husmann' could be listed as a blacksmith as well.

First of all, it is historically incorrect to label these terms as occupations. The great majority were farmers, and a great many of them combined farming with fishing (common on the west coast) and forestry (as was common in Norway's eastern parts and the counties (*fylker*) of Nord-Trøndelag and Sør-Trøndelag, see map of Norway page IX). They even worked as blacksmiths, shoemakers and had occupations in many other types of trades. Their means of livelihood almost never consisted of only one 'occupation', a word that is far too modern. Secondly, there were great regional differences and changes during time.

What is the difference between '*selveier*', '*leielending*, '*husmann*' and '*innerst*'? Mainly, it has to do with their rights to the farming land they were using. It also depended 'where and when' – geography and time.

***Selveier* (pl. *selveiere*)**

A *selveier* (many censuses use the abbreviation 'S') was a person who owned the farmland he or she was using, and who had a registered deed to prove the ownership. This deed was both a security and a potential burden. It was a property and in the case of a bankruptcy it could be lost to a creditor.[1]

During the Middle Ages the Norwegian farmland was owned by the church, the crown or other major landowners, but as early as 1660 one fifth of the farmland in Southern Norway had a *selveier*. During the next century the *selveier* share of the farmland increased, and the *selveier* system spread to western Norway and Norway's central counties, Trøndelag. In Northern Norway this transition did not take place until after 1850.[2]

In this thesis, in an attempt to use the English language uniformly, the word 'Farmer' will be used when referring to a '*Selveier*', which can be translated as 'owner-occupier'.

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[1] Johnan I. Borgos, "Norwegian Farmer Groups," Norwegian Farmers,1995, www.nndata.no.jborgos/leilend.htm, October, 1996.

[2]Olaf Kortner, Preben Munthe and Egil Tveterås, eds., Aschehoug og Gyldendals Store Norske Leksikon (Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget, 1983), S.v. "Bonde" by Bjørn Thingsaker.

***Leilending* (pl. *leilendinger*)**

Leilending (in censuses often shortened to 'leil' or just 'L') is usually translated as "tenant farmer". The *leilending* did not own the farm. The right to use the land was granted through a registered lease contract.[3] The Norwegian word for this lease contract is *bygselbrev*, hence the word *bygselmann* which is synonymous with *leilending*.

The lease was valid for 'his **and** her lifetime'. This clause reveals a very important fact – a *leilending* was usually required to be a married couple. In contrast, there were many single persons in the *selveier* group.[4] Together the *selveiere* and the *leilendinger* constituted the class of farmers that used registered farmland units and should be viewed as socially equal groups. They both commonly had *husmenn* tied to their farms and they both had a lifelong commitment to their land. Even though their net worth was not the same (the *selveier* owned his land), their cash-flow situation was similar. The word 'Farmer' will be used to describe both the *Selveier* and *Leilending*, and only if necessary will I refer to them as seperate groups.

In most cases a *leilending* couple could let married children 'inherit' the lease, but then a new lease contract had to be registered. If a bankruptcy occurred, and it often did, the lease contract was not treated as property, so in most cased the *leilending* could continue to live on his and her leased farm and use that land as before. The biggest threat was the death of either the husband or the wife. Since

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[3] Borgos, "Norwegian Farmer Groups."
[4] Ibid.

there had to be a couple on the farm, remarriages were very common in the *leilending* system

***Innerst* (pl. *innerster*)**

The *innerst* was also called *losjerende* or *logerende*. This group consisted of a couple or single person who rented a room or two, most often on farms. They could be newlyweds waiting to get their own house or farm. Some were seasonal farm workers. Others were people who moved from place to place, making a living doing a craft (shoemakers, tailors, etc) and some were very poor, sick, or elderly people.[5]

Of all the social groups the *innerst* class had the most temporary character: the people in this group were usually in transition, either to something better, but sometimes to something far worse.

Husmann (pl. husmenn)

There are two English words that can be used as translations for the Norwegian word *husmann*. "Cotter' is commonly used when describing the somewhat equivalent 'class' in England. I will use 'Crofter' when discussing *husmenn* in Norway to distinguish them from the English cotters. Behind this term is a very heterogeneous group with great geographical differences and equally great changes through time. But some core conditions seem to have been common for all *husmenn* and they are as follows:

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[5] Arne Sandem, Husmannsvesenet i Østfold (Mysen: Media Øst Trykk, 1999), 13.

The farmland the crofters used, called a *husmannsplass* (crofter's holding), was never registered as a separate farming unit. Their houses were located on a crofter's holding that belonged to a *selveier* (farmer) or was leased by a *leilending* (farmer). Their lease contracts - *husmannsseddel* – were limited in time. In most cases crofters were married.[6]

In censuses and church registries one can find other phrases describing *husmenn*: *Husmann med jord (husm m/j)* – crofter with farmland – had a house, usually a barn etc. to use. A *Husmann uten jord (husm u/j)* – crofter without farmland – had a house and maybe a barn, but did not have any land to use. However, the couple might own a cow and a few sheep. A *Strandsitter* – literally means "shore dweller" – is more or less the same as *husmann uten jord*. Both groups might have had fishing as their main source of income.[7]

There was a social gap between the crofter and the farmer, but less so along the coast than in the inland areas. In northern Norway this gap was almost nonexistent. There fishing was the dominant economic factor; in some cases a crofter could be financially better off than the farmer on the same farm.

The crofter class can be seen as a solution to a difficult problem. A growing population had to make a living in a country where the land resources did not expand at the same rate as the population. Many couples were able to buy or lease a farm, but not all. The latter became crofters. Generally the crofters had at their

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[6] Olaf Kortner, Preben Munthe and Egil Tveterås, eds., Aschehoug og Gyldendals Store Norske Leksikon (Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget, 1983), S.v. "Husmann" by Edvard Bull and Svein Damslora.

[7] Borgos, "Norwegian Farmer Groups."

disposal the poorest land resources, and they lacked any kind of permanent rights to use them.

During the1800s the crofter class grew in numbers. Its means of livelihood did not get any better; most of it experienced harder times. A new opportunity came during the second half of the nineteenth when North American farmland was offered for claim. The emigrants to North America (mainly the United States) were heavily recruited from the crofter group.

Statistical data, past laws and regulations, and history books supply factual material, but they only paint part of the picture representing the crofters' life. Personal accounts like letters, songs, and memoirs give a more personal point of view. Very few crofters wrote about their life experiences, however. This may be because they did not think anybody would care about a group of people who were commonly viewed as 'lower class'. In 1981, the History Association *Tirsdagsklubben* conducted several 'memory surveys' of the elder citizens of their community Trøgstad in Østfold. Mr. Arnt Høgås was one of the men who participated, and he described in detail his childhood as a crofter. A translation of his memoirs is offered in chapter 2, 'Arnt Høgås: a crofter's life.' There are also a few books written, honoring the crofters' memories. Among these are Husmannsminner by Ingrid Semmingsen[8] and Husmannsfolk: Husmannsminner frå Gudbrandsdalen by Arnfinn Engen,[9] both excellent sources of the era of the crofters. Area-specific publications of the crofter institution are also available like, the book Husmannsvesenet i

[8] Ingrid Semmingsen, ed., Husmannsminner (Oslo: Tiden Norsk Forlag, 1960).
[9] Einar Hovdehaugen, Husmannstida (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1975).

Østfold,[10] by Arne Sandem. Population and Society in Norway 1735-1865 [11] by Michael Drake is a content-rich work drawing information from Norwegian social and population studies by both T. R. Malthus and Eilert Sundt, then comparing their conclusions to statistical data using the census reports of that era. The main focus of this book is the situation of the farmers and crofters and how they compared to each other.

Having given a general overview of the Norwegian agrarian history and the definitions of the rural population, the next chapter "Arnt Høgås: a crofter's life" will give one mans account of his life as a crofter. This chapter serves as a overview of the role of the crofters in a society that was facing a number of changes and challenges technically, demographically, economically, politically.

Chapter 3, "The Norwegian crofter", will focus on all the crofters and the role they played in a rapidly changing society. This chapter will explain how this social group became so populous during the middle of the nineteenth century, how they lived, what they did, and so forth. To gain an overall understanding of the ultimate demise of the crofter class we have to put together all the historical factors offered in this thesis, like stitches in a tapestry.

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[10] Arne Sandem, Husmannsvesenet I Østfold (Mysen: Media Øst Trykk, 1999)

[11] Michael Drake, Population and Society in Norway 1735-1865, Cambridge: University Press, 1969.

Chapter 2: Arnt Høgås: a crofter's life

The following is an interview of Arnt Høgås from Trøgstad in Østfold. *Tirsdagsklubben*, the local history group, conducted the interview in 1981. Mr. Høgås lived at the nursing home in Skjønhaug, Trøgstad, when he was asked to tell about his life and experiences as part of a crofter family as a child and young man. The interview was taped and transcribed by Tora Morstang. The transcript was written in dialect to reflect Mr. Høgås as closely as possible. My translation is written in Standard English but is in a conversational style.

Mr. Høgås' story is a unique and personal tale of the institution of the crofters. He talked about most of the factors that were part of shaping the future for both him and the other rural residents, not only in Trøgstad, but also all over Norway. His rich story of being born into a crofter family, being part the crofter culture as a child and young man, and eventually becoming a freeholder and laborer is almost a perfect summary of all the major issues in this thesis. He told about his childhood that was laced with a mixture of work, play, school, and more work. He soberly retells the hardships his family went through when there was little food to feed a family of eight. He took pride in that even though he was from a crofter background, he too could succeed by working hard. He talked about the crofter contracts his father made with the farmer, and how he helped contribute to the family's income by giving his father all the income he earned.

Childhood

I was born on the crofter's holding Høgås, part of the farm Jørentvedt in Trøgstad, on September 8, 1888. My mother's name was Petrine, born Kristianssen, in 1851 on the crofter's holding Tuen part of the farm Langsrud. My father's name was Martin Torkelsen, and he was born in 1843 on a crofter's holding part of the farm Risbråte. He was a shoemaker by trade and did this until he married in 1875.

We moved from Høgås [to Roligheta, another crofter's holding] in 1892 when I was four years old. Following the customs of that era, the crofter had to give notice before *Mikkelsmesse* (29. September),[12] as they used to say at the parsonage farm. This move is the earliest I can remember because there was a terrible thunderstorm and we were bringing two cows with us. I can still envision the road; it was the old one below Tveiten farm. The new one, "*linna,*" came in to use the next year, in 1893.

We arrived at Roligheta, one of the holdings part of the farm Grav at that time. It later became part of the farm Tveiten. We were a family of eight: Father, Mother, three boys, and three girls. The living quarters were like they were at the other holdings: a small cottage that had of kitchen and one bedroom. In the bedroom

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[12] *Mikkelsmesse*, September 29. This is an old Church holiday honoring the archangel Michael. This was a holy day in Norway until the Church limited the number of celebrated holidays in 1770, but until quite recently it has been considered a quasi holy day in many rural areas. *Mikkelsmesse* was for many people a traditional, important harvest celebration, *Høstfest*, and hence one of the major celebrations of the year. By this date all crops should be harvested and stored in the barn, the cattle and sheep should have been brought back from the pastures, since winter and snow could be right around the corner.

straw was spread on the floor to be slept on. Some slept in the kitchen. In addition to a cow stable and a barn there was a *bu* (*stabbur*) (a storage house

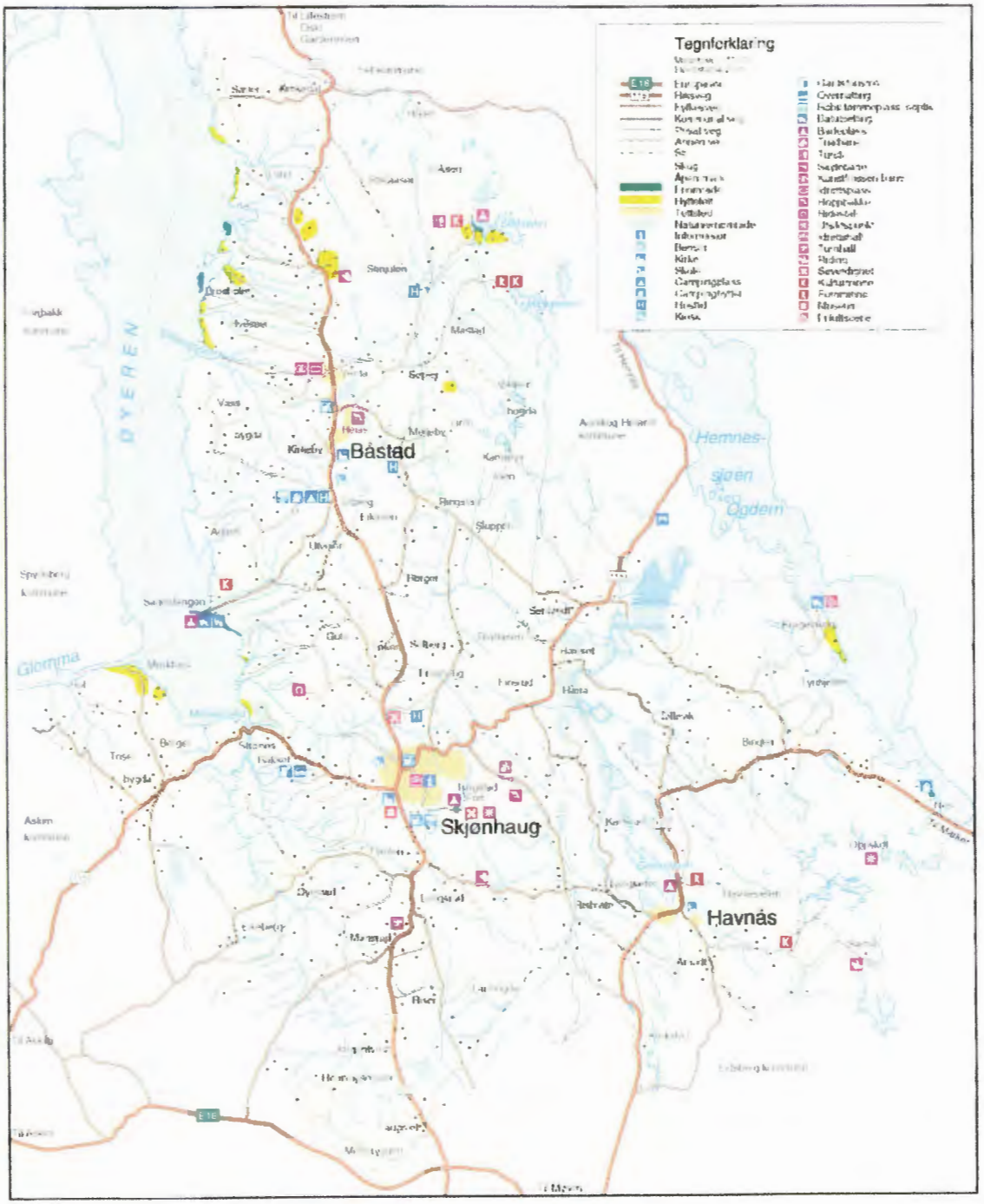

Figure 15. Trøgstad, Østfold

on pillars). The farmland was better [than the previous crofter's holding], and we had about thirty dekares (about eight acres). We fed the two cows, planted some rye, and grew potatoes. In the beginning the kitchen door was on the outside wall, but then we had an enclosed porch built to reduce the draft. I guess the builder wasn't too lucky with the door when it was installed because it hung in such a way that it always slammed shut. Somebody once called it the "coffin lid" and that is what the door became known as.

Figure 16. Crofter's Holding in Valestrand. Although this was not where Arnt Høgås lived, this was a common type of house for a crofter's holding in the Eastern parts of Norway. This is the photographer's childhood vacation home. Photo: Ole Johnny Øglend Kristiansen
Source: Ole Johnny Øglend Kristiansen[13]

Play

It was us kids from the various holdings who mainly stuck together. However, we also became friends with the kids from Grav farm, and we continued to remain friends after we had moved. Toys to play with were nothing else than what we

[13] http://heim.ifi.uio.no/~ojkristi/3.jpg

managed to make ourselves. The girls had some rag dolls and such. I remember playing "throw mitten". We rolled a mitten together so it sort of became a ball, and we would throw it back and forth to each other. But the older kids threw "*monk*", and we little kids liked to watch. The "*monk*" was a split fire log about one-half meter long, and it was placed on the bridge that led to the second floor of the barn. Then, taking turns, a solid fire log about three quarters of a meter long was thrown toward the "*monk*" to tip it over. One of my sisters, well, she probably sat too close at one time, got a big bump on her head after being hit in the head by the thrown log. I rubbed the bump carefully with the blade of a knife, and that night the bump was nearly gone!

The economy during childhood

The crofters had paid required work on the farm to which they were tied. At Roligheta my father was paid a daily wage of 27 *øre* during the winter and 40 *øre* during the summer. This equaled a yearly wage of 150.50 *kroner*![14] Of this he paid 80 *kroner* for the rent of the crofter's holding. The two first years the farmer only required 60 *kroner*, and my father thought this was a reasonable rent. It was convenient that my father [also] was a shoemaker and did this work during the evening hours, and that we had two cows which supplied us with enough milk for sale. I took the milk to the grocer Gunerus Hansen, to the store where the farm Sannemgården is now. We charged seven *øre* per liter milk, and Gunerus thought this was rather high. My mother could not spare too much milk to be used by my

[14] Modern Norwegian currency: 1 Krone (Nkr) consists of 100 øre.

family, but some was churned around when the calves were born. Ever so often there could also be some boiled brown cheese made of evaporated milk.

We didn't have many Christmas presents to speak of. We were happy if we got a piece of clothing or a pair of boots. I cannot remember such a thing as getting a toy. It was especially important to get a new piece of clothing, because there was a saying that if we didn't get that for Christmas, we had to sit under the tail of a chicken! We didn't have a Christmas tree, and I am sure that was because we had so little space; eight people in two small rooms.

Diet during childhood

We had enough to eat to get full, I think, but the fare was very simple. The first year at Roligheta was tough, because according to custom we were not allowed to cut the rye at the holding from where we had moved. But every once in a while my father was offered flour at the farm, probably as part of his salary. He [my father] was so fond of pea-bread and *klot*, a shredded potato dish, with grease drippings over, so he always chose pea-flour. That winter we didn't have any rye [flour], so we hardly ever had any bread. We had pea-flour waffles and pea-flour pancakes – it tasted pretty bitter. Us kids were pretty tired of it and one of us said, "If only the rat would take it!" My father got mad and said we shouldn't have any food at all. "Poor kids" my mother said, "that is easy for you to say who gets to go other places and eat other kinds of food as well".

Dinner mainly consisted of potatoes with salt and caraway seeds. That too was good food. We went to Gravtjern (a small lake in the forest) and set out bow

nets and fishing nets and caught large pikes, perch, and roach. This was fancy Sunday food. I cannot remember whether or not we had a pig at that time, but at Christmas time we had the butchering of the calves. Now and then we had molasses, which we used as a spread for the bread, and once in a while we had sour cheese and boiled brown cheese.[15]

At Christmas my mother made sure the food was special. If we could afford a piece of un-smoked bacon we had salty, boiled, rolled sausage and rice porridge for Christmas Eve dinner. We had "*mølje*" for lunch, which consisted of flat bread (a crisp, almost paper thin rye bread without yeast) that we broke into small pieces in our bowl and poured meat stock over, and preferably good fat dripping over that again. I know it was like that on all the holdings I knew – everything was done to make sure there was good food and plenty of it for the Christmas holiday. The custom was to have three kinds of breads back then. Sweet-wort bread, rye bread, and caraway bread. The women doing the baking went from farm to farm and kept busy, especially at Christmas. I clearly remember the one who came to Grav and made flatbread of rye and wheat flour, and lefse too. Thirteenth day Christmas, January 6, was also a holiday with no work and a special meal. If we needed to buy bread - this was in 1907 - we went to Jul Øierud and bought six loafs of bread for one *krone*.

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[15] White cheese, or sour cheese, was made of buttermilk using cheesecloth etc. The leftovers which was drained away still had nutrients in it. This liquid was slowly boiled until most of the liquid had evaporated, leaving a paste in the bottom of the pan which was referred to as brown cheese or "*innkokt*".

St. Hans eve (June 23rd) was the 'crofter's holiday'. We were dismissed from work in the afternoon of St. Hans eve and all of St. Hans day. Then we had sour cream porridge and at some places there were a bonfire at night. My father used to go to Lillestrøm to visit his sister.

The crofter's holdings

There were many places that were part of the farms in Trøgstad. In the area we lived the crofter families had a lot of contact with each other. We could get together during the weekends and other occasions. The kids played together and walked to school together. The ones closest to us were two Skorpsno cottages under Tveiten farm, and then there were Kjellsås and Roligheta under Tveiten farm, Rognerud by the church, and two Skrikerud cottages. Under Langsrud farm and Risbråte farm there were many cottages, but that was further away. Not too far from Høgås were the two Henningsmo cottages, four Franse cottages, three Skrikerud cottages, three Hjeiterud cottages, and the cabin Kjølabon. And there were even more!

My best school and play buddy was Sigvart Myrene. We are from the same crofter family. His father and my mother were first cousins, and my grandmother was from Myrene. Her brother, Torer Jackobsen, was a tinker. Then there was Hans saddle maker and Nikolai tailor – these three craftsmen were all from Henningsmo cottages and were thought of as very handy people.

In 1904 our time as crofters ended. Then my father was able to buy Høgås where we had been crofters earlier. For several years it was very hard

economically; everything I earned my father took. Now I was back to where I was born. The buildings were old and in poor shape. The foundation was crumbling and we had to redo the roof of the cottage. Pine dowels had been used in the beams, and before that it had been a turf roof. On the barn there was a straw roof when we came. The cottage here was a bit roomier. The kitchen here was larger than the other two places we had lived, and the floor was made of wide plank, 4-5 inches wide each. The bedroom was small, only the width of the length of the bed, and high up on a wall there was a small window with four panes. We slept like herrings in a barrel in this cottage. We were two adults, six children, and two boarders in the kitchen. I still have the floor lamp, which my father and mother got as a wedding gift. I also have a chest of drawers, a plant stand, and a large armoire with two doors. There was an old brick oven and I clearly remember my mother baking the best bread in it. She gently fried the bread over open fire before she put in the oven. Later we got a '*fele-ovn.*'[16]

School

I had to start school at Skjønhaug while I was living at Roligheta. We had Miss Grimsrud and she also owned the café Valdisholm in Mysen, the closest town. The school hours were from 9 A.M. to 3 A.M. twice a week. I was a quick learner and I liked school. In 1901 we moved away from Roligheta and moved to Bråten under the farm Mellegård, and we stayed there for three years.

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[16] A *fele-ovn*, or "fiddle oven," was shaped like a fiddle, wider in front and back with a narrower center. It had a flat top with two or three burners, usually made of interlocking iron rings which were taken out or added back to adjust the size of the hole to the open fire. Wood was used as fuel.

There was a schoolhouse at Jørentvedt, so now I had to go there for two days a week. My oldest brother went to school there earlier so I am well aware of what had happened earlier. The first teacher was Hans Rasmussen, a Rakkestad man, who had the seminar. That was in the old school house. My second oldest brother, August, was so small and frail for his age, so when he went to start school Mr. Rasmussen said, "You better wait a year, my boy". This way August was nine years old when he started school. Mr. Rasmussen was a good teacher, but he was a little nervous and jumpy.

In the spring of 1903 we had our final examination at Skjønhaug, and there were a lot of wealthy folks there who came to listen. I was asked to step up to the blackboard and draw the square root. "Turn around and face the class and explain what you have learned" the teacher said. I thought that was a lot too ask of a crofter's kid when there were so many rich folks there. Well, I dived into it and kept on going. I read some and solved some math problems. "Are you done?" the teacher asked, and I answered, "Yes," and he came with the answer key to the problems. First I got a big R (indicating "*rett*" which means correct) and under that he wrote "*Særdeles*" ("extraordinary", which made it the highest grade). So it didn't matter if you were a crofter's kid or a rich kid to be intelligent. But you see, we had a teacher who did not treat us differently. He put those who were not good at reading in the corner, no matter who you were. This teacher was Torval Fosser.

Work

I started working away from home early on. I was at Mellegard farm and transported sand already in 1902, the year before I got confirmed. I was fourteen then... Made three trips each day over Langsrudåsen to Østbygda. We didn't have a horse at home then, so I borrowed one somewhere else. I always worked hard, but I still hadn't been young. I sacrificed having a wife for my home [and family].

I moved away from home and worked elsewhere in 1907. First I was at the farm Grav. At Gravshagan, where the bus garages are now, two of us would cut down young trees. We split the wood so it could be used for fencing and we made poles. We used fir branches that were cleaned so there was only a small tusk left on the end to tie the poles together. At that time there were wooden fences all over. I dug an awful lot of ditches too, for a few years. One year at Grav I managed 1328 meters and that was using only a shovel. No machines then, oh no! Forty meters ditch per day; it was common that I did that.

In 1908, I had turned twenty then, I started at the Jørentvedt sawmill. There were two sawmills lined up which ran in shifts twenty-four hours a day. The railroad needed ties and I switched between tarring and cutting. Every other week; day and night. I was able to tar ten ties in fifteen minutes, and the man who burned the tar said I was one of their hardest workers. The tie was heavy but I handled it with ease. I got seven *øre* for each tie I tarred. When I cut ties I managed twenty dozen each day, and that meant two *kroner* per day. Never had a single *øre* for my own

use because my father took it all. He needed the money because it was only four years since we had bought Høgås.

Later I dug peat moss on Langsrudmåsen. Before I went there in the morning I helped my sister in the cow stable and delivered the milk. Then I went to Langsrudmåsen and dug peat moss for two cabins, twenty-four cubic meters, and then home again to do other work. My sack lunch consisted of rye bread and on rare occasions a piece of sausage or cheese. If I brought milk, I put the bottle down in the moss to keep it cool.

Health

We didn't have much use for the doctor in my family. In his younger years my father lost all of his hair, all of a sudden, and he went to the veterinarian in Spydeberg and got something for that. Toward the end, in the thirties, his eyesight slowly went away, but that was a thing one could not do anything about. Mother broke her thighbone then, and I watched her day and night for three weeks in addition to doing the chores in the cow stable and my other job away from home. She died September 22, 1930, on my father's birthday. She was eighty then. Father died in May 1935, and he was ninety-one and a half. At my mother's funeral there were eighty people, and for my father's there were sixty-five. There was a dinner, coffee, and supper for everyone at our house. My sister who lived at home died on August 1st in 1967. Since then I have lived alone.

When it came to doctoring of small incidents, leeches were put on, even for toothaches! Sweet cream was rubbed on so she [the leech] would get a good grip.

We had "*latær-øks*" for bleeding. A small glass was heated and put on first, where we were going to bleed. The vacuum in the glass made a bump in the flesh which we poked a hole in with the "*latærøksa.*" It was a spring in it that gave it some tension.

Some people used a 'wife.' She lived on Faulihaugen, but we never called for her. Wormwood was used for both people and animals. The broth of boiled juniper was used for several things, such as a warm drink for the animals, the washing of pots and pans, beer brewing and the Saturday bath.[17]

Arnt Høgås' life reads like a textbook case of the crofters. His story does not just repeat many of the points discussed in the previous chapters, he validates them. His experience was shared by many crofters elsewhere in Norway, most of whom were from the eastern parts of Norway. The crofters from the west coast and northern Norway would most certainly have included stories of the ocean and the fishing industry. Most likely, crofters from those areas would have spoken of even meager conditions and the emigration of family and friends. But in general, I feel that Mr. Høgås gives a valuable insight to a social group of the Norwegian past, even though old age might have given him selective memory that could have tended to give him a romanticized view of his childhood.

Arnt Høgås grew up in a society that was facing regular challenges demographically, economically, and hence politically. Norway was a country with a long, rich, and proud history. However, in many ways Norway became a nation

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[17] Arnt Høgås, Interview by Tora Morstang, 1981, interview BB52, transcript, Tirsdagsklubben, Trøgstad Historielag, Trøgstad Bibliotek, Trøgstad, Norway. Translated by Kari Holth.

reborn, struggling to regain her own identity both nationalistically and politically after the break with the Danish crown in 1814. Then, an independent state with her own constitution, Norway was forced to be under the Swedish crown. In 1905, when Arnt Høgås was seventeen years old, the union between Norway and Sweden ended and King Haakon VII was crowned the Norwegian King. The Norwegians were then able to make their own laws, based on their own beliefs and their own needs. In what became a rapidly changing environment both inside and outside the national borders, the *Storting* and its many cabinets struggled to find the right balance between the need of the people and the management of resources.

Chapter 3: The Norwegian Crofter

A brief background

The institution of crofters in Norway can be traced back to time of the Vikings. However, it was not until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that crofters were referred to in official documents. By 1723 there were 67,312 farmers and 11,814 crofters in Norway.[18] The crofter class had grown in such numbers that the government started viewing this group of workers and their families as a separate social class. King Frederik V (regent from 1746-66) mandated in 1750 that the crofters should have a work agreement with the farmers they worked for.[19] The crofter class continued its growth and reached its peak in the mid-nineteenth century. After a sharp increase, a drastic reduction in the number of crofters occurred. In 1807 39,411 crofters were living in Norway. In 1865 there were 65,060, 19,763 in 1910 and 6079 in 1928.[20] In relationship to the total rural population this meant that in 1807 4.95 percent were crofters, in 1865 the percentage of the population who were crofters was 4.75 percent The percentage had dropped to 1.34

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[18] S, Dyrvik, et.al eds.,Norsk Økonomisk Historie, 1500-1850 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1979), 186 and189.

[19] Arne Sandem, Husmannsvesenet i Østfold 11.

[20] Olaf Kortner, Preben Munthe and Egil Tveterås, eds., Aschehoug og Gyldendals Store Norske Leksikon (Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget, 1983), S.v. "Husmenn" by Edvard Bull and Svein Damslora.

The actual number of crofters, especially during the early nineteenth century, is hard to be certain of. Since there were no strict standard when classifying a person, there is a chance that some crofters were not counted as such. Also, it is uncertain if spouses and children of crofters were counted as "crofters" which will make the numbers in table 1 on page 13 minimum numbers.

percent 1910 and was only 0.4 percent in 1928.[21] In approximately seventy-five years over ninety percent of the crofters had disappeared.

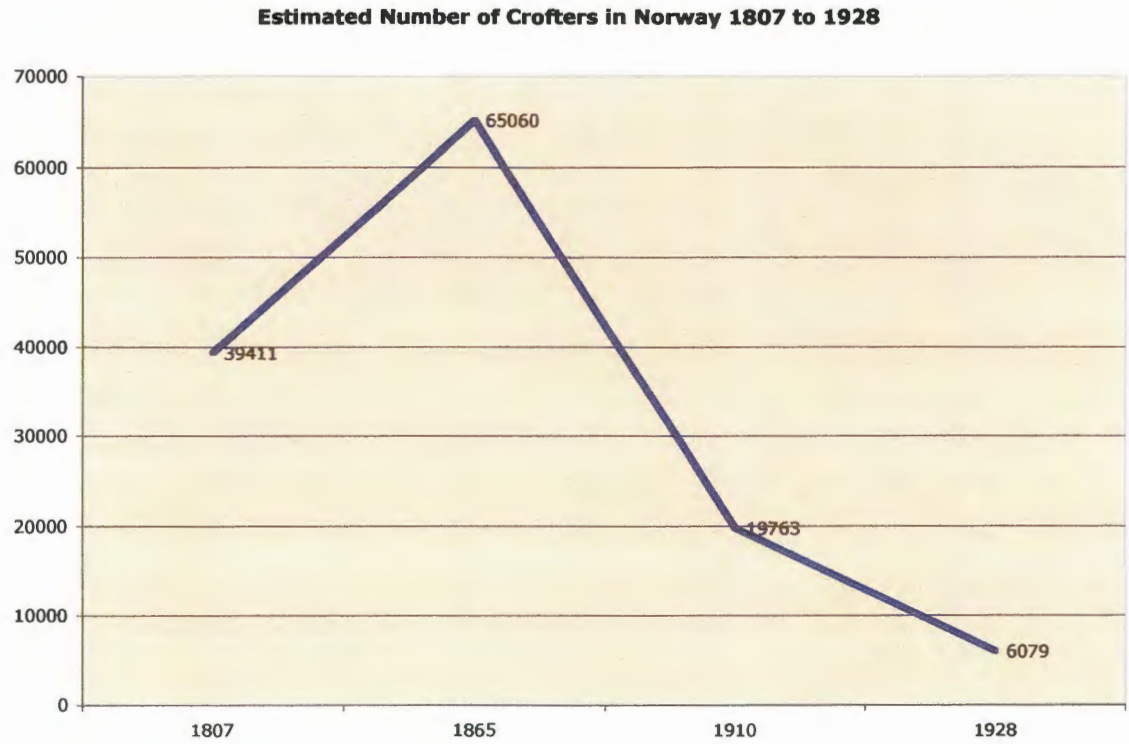

Table 1. Source: Aschehoug og Gyldendals Store Norske Leksikon

The daily life and living conditions of the crofters were generally not as good as the members of the farmer class. Many crofters were at total mercy of the farmer they served. In the article "*En liten oversikt over husmannsvesenet i Norge*" (A short overview of the institution of crofters in Norway) by Leif Halvorsen and Marit Larsen, crofters were referred to as "slaves".[22] This was probably true in some circumstances. My research has shown that their living conditions were hard, but I believe it was the best Norway's pre-industrial society had to offer its growing

[21] Statistisk Årbok for Kongeriket Norge, 51st edition (Oslo: Statistisk Centralbyrå, H. Aschehoug & Co, 1932), 4.

[22] Leif Halvorsen and Marit Larsen, "Historisk arbeidsoppgave: En liten oversikt over husmannsvesenet i Norge," Borreminne (spring 1953), http://borreminne.hive.no/aargangene/2002/03-husmannsvesen.htm, 09.13.2004.

population. Social awareness, among all layers of society, was low up until the mid nineteenth century along with a poor utilization of available natural resources. From 1801 to 1865 the population had doubled, and by 1930 it had more than tripled, and there was continuous pressure on economic resources.

The reasons for the increase in the population are many. After the Napoleonic War there was a sharp increase in the birth rate combined with a sharp decrease of the death rate. The rise of the birthrate in 1815 was tied to a pattern going back into the mid-eighteenth century that continued into the second half of the nineteenth century.[23] There was a spike in the birthrate in the 1750s, 1790s, 1820s, and 1850s. "As Eilert Sundt pointed out a century ago [in his book Om giftermaal i Norge, Christiania, 1855, 53-64] this wave-like movement was largely a product of changes in the age composition of the population."[24] During social distress both the number of marriages and childbirth declined, and when better times returned both increased. Not only did the individuals who had reached a marriageable age establish families and have children, but so did those individuals who had chosen to wait to marry and have a family during the previous distress years. This again created a larger than average number of births, which in turn was part of causing a peak in the birthrate twenty to thirty years later. The death rate followed a different pattern. Towards the end of the Napoleonic War the death rate fell to a historically low level, and this level was maintained. The fall in mortality had two major factors, according to Drake. The first was the widespread adoption of vaccinations against

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[23] Drake, Population and Society in Norway, 1735-1865, 42-43.
[24] Ibid.

small pox and the second was the increased cultivation of potatoes.[25] The church played a vital role in both of these factors. Vaccinations were made compulsory by royal edict of 3 April 1810. There was no civil penalty if a person chose not to get vaccinated, but the Church would neither confirm nor marry these individuals. The clergy, especially on the west coast, played a vital role in the spread and education about the cultivation and usage of the potato.[26] A family could produce and yield more potatoes than grains on their land. The output of agricultural products grew at an astonishing seventy per cent from 1801 to 1830, and aided in the increased birthrate and the decreased death rate.[27]

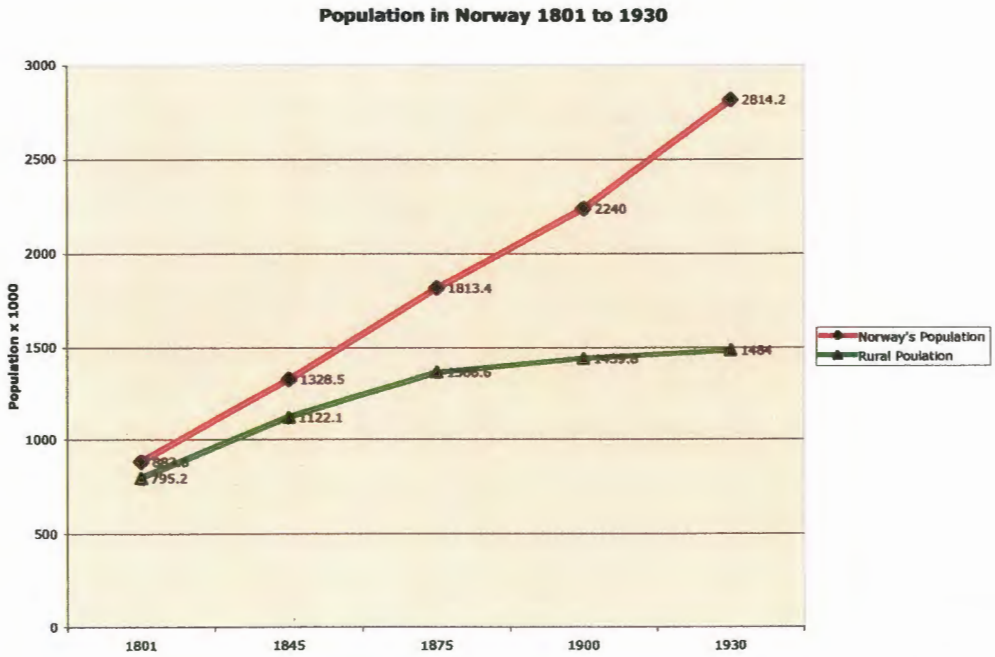

Table 2. Source: Statistisk Sentralbyrå[28]

[25] Ibid, 49.
[26] Ibid, 54.
[27] Ibid, 59.
[28] Urban areas are defined as areas having at least 200 inhabitants and where the houses are generally less than 50 meters apart. Other areas are considered rural.

The rising numbers of crofters toward the middle of the nineteenth century was a reflection of the rapidly growing population. In 1801 almost nine out of ten Norwegians lived in rural communities with agriculture as their backbone. This was true for 8.5 out of ten Norwegians in 1845. As illustrated in Table 2 on page 28, this ratio changed drastically over the next eight-five years. By 1930, for every Norwegian that lived in a rural community, one Norwegian lived in an urban center.

The young men and women who did not inherit a farm had in general three options apart from leaving the rural areas. They could lease a farm and become leaseholders, but only if a farm was available for lease. They could stay on the family farm owned by a parent or a sibling and work for wages. The men could cut wood, strip bark and tend to the fields and the animals. The women could do household chores, weaving, baking and so on. If they wished to form their own household but did not have the opportunity or means to lease a farm, they could become crofters on an already established crofter's holding or they could clear and create their own.

The third option, becoming a crofter, was the solution for the majority of the people with little or no means, as there still were very few opportunities outside the rural areas by the middle of the nineteenth century. Hence the result was an almost explosive increase in the number of crofters until 1850.

Becoming a crofter

Before 1850, Norway's farming communities were based on a barter economy. It was advantageous for farmers to compensate their workers by giving them agricultural products and land to rent. In return, it was advantageous for the

workers to live on and manage their own land, even if the plot was small and rented. A small plot of land located on the outskirts of a deeded farm – a *crofter's holding* – was a basis, a kind of bridgehead from which a poor agricultural worker could make some progress in the fight for existence. Even though the land on the crofter's holding could not yield enough grain to support a family, it could most likely yield enough potatoes for a family's private consumption. The crofter could also have a cow, a pig, a sheep, and some chickens to diversify the family's diet and income. The agricultural census of 1907 shows that almost half of Norway's crofter's holdings had five dekares[29] or less of cultivated land. This applied to seventy per cent of the holdings in the western and northern parts of Norway. Only in eastern Norway were the holdings larger; almost forty per cent had more than twenty dekares of tilled land.[30] The reason for the different sizes of the holdings is tied to the topography of Norway. In Norway's eastern parts the topography is conducive for cultivating large areas of land. In the other areas of Norway, mountains and steep valleys contribute to making agriculture a challenge.

A crofter was a man who rented a crofter's holding that belonged to the farmer for whom he worked. The crofter's holding was as mentioned a small plot of land. There would be a house and one or two other utility buildings on the plot. The crofter's holding was separated from the main farm as its own unit but did not have a deed as private property. The land remained the property of the owner of the main farm. The ownership of the house in which the crofter and his family lived – rarely

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[29] 1 dekare (1 daa) = 1000 square meters = about 0.25 acres
[30] Hovdehaugen, Husmannstida, 25.

was a crofter single - varied in the different regions of the country. In some areas it was common for the crofter to own the house and the outbuildings. He might even have built them himself. This was usually the case in Trøgstad, Østfold. In other areas the house and utility buildings belonged to the farmer.

Figure 2. Kjelvika crofter's holding, Salten.

Source: Salten Reiseliv [31]

To obtain a crofter's holding a contract between the farmer and the crofter was drawn, and the crofter usually paid an initial one-time fee, or a non-refundable deposit. Sometimes the contract would describe at great length the crofter's work responsibilities on the farm. It would also establish an annual lease fee, or rent, the crofter should pay the farmer. The contract could be either oral or written. The crofter Christian Brynelsen Schønhaug signed a written contract with farmer Christian Nøchelby in 1845 that required the crofter to pay a yearly rent of 3 *Spesidaler* for the crofter's holding on the farm Vestre Tveiten. The contract also stated how many days the crofter had to work on the farm and what his

[31]Salten Reiseliv, Salten,http://www.saltenreiseliv.no, 09.13.2004.

responsibilities were.[32] The crofter's holding could have a lease that was life-long, yearly, or terminal.

Work responsibilities and compensation

In the eastern parts of Norway the crofters typically had a year-round, usually heavy work responsibility to the farmer. He was paid a daily wage which was stated in the contract or that was the norm in that particular rural community. These wages were usually lower than those of day laborers (see table 3 on page 34). More often than not the crofter was paid in grains, flour, clothes, and other products rather than being paid in cash wages. The work arrangement usually left the crofter with very little time to tend his own, small fields, so evening and Sunday work was quite common in this area of the country. The work demanded would also include the crofter's wife and children. In Trøgstad it was common that crofter's wife was obligated to weave a predetermined number of meters of fabric and to sew a certain number of articles of clothing per year. Flax was commonly grown and the women would make their own yarn for weaving. The loom was a household item and was hardly ever taken down.[33]

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[32] A translation of the entire contract is given in the Appendix.
[33] This information was received from Tirsdagsklubben.

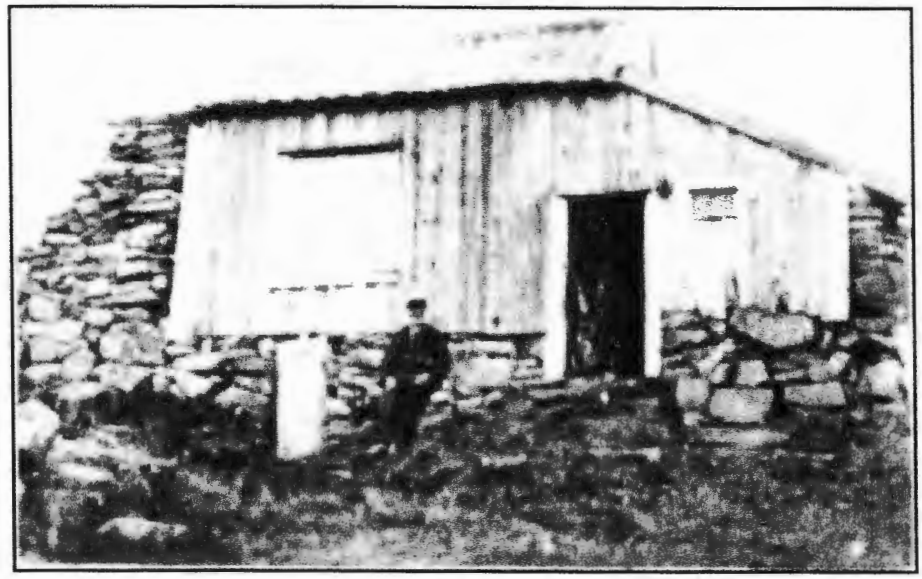

Figure 3. Crofter's Holding, Lista

Source: Lista Museum [34]

In the western parts of Norway crofters were usually only required to work enough to cover the rent. The crofter's contract would specify a certain number of days to be worked on the farm during the busiest seasons of the year. This enabled the crofters in these areas to spend more time cultivating their own fields as well as seek other employment for cash wages in, for example, the fishing and logging industries. However, one must not get the impression that the crofter's work was easy. A study about Balestrand, a community in western Norway, showed that during the spring season the crofter and his wife were required to work during the planting. He was also required to maintain the fences in certain areas, built hayracks, and removed rocks, large and small, from the farmer's fields while his wife baked breads and other goods. The crofters' responsibilities were heavier during the haying season. He generally had to harvest one *dalarteig,* approximately 9500

[34]Lista Museum, Lista Museum, 11.12.2003, http://www.museumsnett.no/alias/HJEMMESIDE/listamuseum, 09.13.2004.

square feet – about four and one-half days work. The grain harvest was also important and a crofter harvested, on average, fourteen thousand square feet, which took about six days of work to do. Finally the crofter and his wife worked for two days during the potato harvest.[35]

In 1920 a crofter bringing his own food to work was paid 12,00 Nkr[36] per day during the summer season, compared to a day laborer's pay of 15,00 Nkr. The table below shows the daily wages in Nkr for crofters from 1900 to 1920, in five-year intervals.

	Crofters		**Male day laborers**	
	Summer	Winter	Summer	Winter
1900	1.50	1.20	3.00	2.00
1905	1.50	1.20	3.00	2.00
1910	2.00	1.50	3.00	2.00
1915	2.50	2.00	3.50	3.00
1920	12.00	8.00	15.00	10.00

Table 3. Daily wages in Nkr for crofters and male day laborers 1900-20.[37]

The farmer and the crofter usually had an unsettled account. The crofter usually owed money to the farmer. This gave the farmer a slight advantage if he cared to use it. On the other hand, it was the only credit the crofter could get, and when the relationship between the farmer and the crofter was good, the farmer was probably a reasonable creditor. In Trøgstad it was common that the account was kept track of by using '*blekker*' or playing cards as tokens representing monetary

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[35] Jon Gjerde, From Peasant to Farmer, The Migration from Balestrand, Norway, to the Upper Middle West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 65-66.

[36] Nkr is the abbreviation for Norwegian *krone*, the modern Norwegian currency. 1 *krone* (1 Nkr) consists of 100 *øre*.

[37] Bygdekomiteen i Hobøl, Hobølboka, Bind 3. (Mysen: 1995)

value. The farmer would pay the crofter with a card from a deck of cards. One whole card would symbolize one *spesidaler*[38], one half card would be one half *spesidaler*, and so on. If the crofter needed materials, seed, flour and other items from the farmer, he would pay him by using the cards he had received as payment from the farmer. At the end of each year the farmer and the crofter would settle the account and the cards were converted into real money.

Marriage and fertility

It could be anticipated, when the households of the farmers and the households of the crofters are compared, that there would be some differences. One might expect that the household size of the farmers was bigger than the crofters since a farmer might house, in addition to his wife and children also members of the older generation, servants, workers, and lodgers. One might also expect that the farmers had a lower number of children than the crofters, since there seems to be a traditional view that couples in the lower social classes had more children than couples in the higher social classes. Michael Drake's analysis published in Population and Society in Norway 1735-1865 confirms some of these expectations but refutes the suggestion that crofters had more children than the farmers. In the chapter "*The social structure of fertility*" Drake uses three areas of Norway when drawing his conclusions. Herøy is a coastal community on Norway's west coast where fishing was the dominant source of work; Hallingdal is an inland area with a valley and mountain topography best suited for cattle, sheep and goats; and

[38] *Spesidaler* (Spd.) was the currency used in Norway until 1875 when the krone and øre system was introduced. 1 *spesidaler* consisted of 120 *skilling* (Sk.).

Hedemark is an inland area in eastern Norway dominated by large, fertile fields favorable to agriculture. Although he finds regional differences as a whole, the regional differences between the farmers and the crofters are surprisingly small.

The most significant differences he discovered between the farmers and crofters as it relates to fertility is the average age of the crofter wives and the farmer wives. In all three geographical areas the farmer wives are on average younger than the crofter wives. "The number of young children in a crofter's home was primarily dependant upon the fertility of himself and his wife. The study has suggested that marital fertility was a function of the age of the wife. When we find, therefore, that the median age of the crofters' wives in Hedemark was 45 years, as against 42 for the farmers' wives, we would expect farmers to have more children than [wives] of crofters."[39] The age of the farmers' wives in Hallingdal was an average of 40 compared to 45 for that of crofters and the corresponding ages were 43 for the farmers' wives and 51 for the crofters' wives in Herøy.[40] The census of 1801 backs up the assumption that younger women have more children than older women, hence explaining why the farmer couples on average had more children than the crofter couples. In Hallingdal there were 1,322 children age 0 – 4 years for every 1,000 farmer wives and widows aged 15 – 49 years, compared to 994 children for every 1,000 crofter wives and widows of the same age range. In Hedemark there were 936 farmers children and 881 crofters' children for every 1,000 women of the corresponding groups.[41]

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[39] Drake, Population and Society in Norway, 1735-1865, 122-23.
[40] Ibid, 123.
[41] Ibid.

The crofter family

Most crofters were married and had in most cases many children. Their large families lived together in the small house on the crofter's holding. Their diet was simple, often lacking the needed nutrition for the numerous growing children and overworked adults. Arne Sandem quotes Camilla Collet[42] in his book Husmannsvesenet i Østfold:[43] "No one can really fathom how the life is in a small cottage. We do not understand the concept of having water soup for breakfast, water soup for dinner, and water soup for supper. The only difference is that [in between] there is no water soup. One [the wife] should be thankful if one [she] gets a husband that does not drink and does not hit." Camilla Collet gives a grim description of a crofter's life of poor nutrition and express the belief that domestic abuse was fairly common. I believe there were regional differences in how the diet was for the crofters. In eastern Norway where the crofter's holdings were larger, the diet was far better than that described by Camilla Collet.

The different members of the crofter family had different responsibilities both on the crofter's holding and on the farm. The children as well as the adults had their assigned chores. The members of Tirsdagsklubben in Trøgstad were of great help when supplying the following summary of a year in the life of a crofter family.

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[42] Camilla Collet (1813-95), was the younger sister of the Norwegian author Henrik Wergeland. Camilla Collet , born into the Norwegian upper class, also became an author. Her father, Nicolai Wergeland, who had been part of signing the new Norwegian constitution in 1814, was concerned about the social injustices and taught his children his ideas.

[43] Arne Sandem, Husmannsvesenet i Østfold, 10.

Figure 4. A crofter's wife is cooking at home in Odda, early 1900s. Photo: Anders P. Wallevik
Source: Hardanger Folkemuseum og Wallevik-samlinga[44]

The husband

The husband usually worked for the farmer throughout the year. In general terms the following outline provided by the members of *Tirsdagsklubben* describes what a year of this obligatory labor might have looked like for a crofter in Østfold:

January: He would log in the forest using a saw that was pulled back and forth by two men or by using an ax. The timber was pulled out of the forest by the help of horses.

February: Logging

March: Logging

April: Some logging. He would cut and split firewood for the farmer. The end of the logging and the beginning of the preparation of the planting of the fields depended on how early or late the spring season came. If the planting started in April, there was also the work of spreading the cattle manure on the fields.

May: The planting of the fields usually lasted the entire month of May.

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[44]"Hardanger Folkemuseum og Wallevik-samlinga," Kulturnett Hordaland, http://hordaland.kulturnett.no, 09.13.2004.

June: After the planting was done the maintenance and the repair work started. There were fences, usually wooden, to repair and make, fertilizing to be done, and the preparation for the hay season was done.

July: The hay was cut, hung to dry, and taken into storage to be used as fodder for the animals during the winter season.

August: If the weather had been bad, work with the hay had to be finished. The preparations had to be made for the grain harvest as it sometimes started the last week of August.

September: This month was usually dominated by the grain harvest

October: In the beginning of the month the potatoes were harvested. When this was done the fields were tilled.

November: The threshing of the grains started inside the barn.

December: Once the threshing was done, a few days were spent slaughtering. The work in the forest started up again at this point.

In addition, to the work done for the farmer, the crofter kept up his own field(s), took care of the few animals his family had, collected wood in the forest for firewood, and did the needed upkeep on his house and outbuildings. In Trøgstad it was common that the crofter had a secondary source of income. He could be a shoemaker, a tailor, a clock maker, a tinker or have any other trade that was to his benefit.

The wife

The wife could generally do any task that was required. She was responsible for the housekeeping, the cooking and cleaning, weaving cloth and sewing garments. She would prepare wool and flax and spin it into yarn. She was also very often the one who was responsible for taking care of the animals the crofter family had. She fed the animals, milked the cows, and took care of the eggs and any other

product produced by the livestock. She would usually sell most of the milk and eggs to supplement the family's income. Many crofters had lodgers who stayed with them for both short and long periods of time. The wife would then be responsible for making food and other necessities for these people.

Her responsibilities on the farm would vary from contract to contract, but it was common that she, along with her husband, was obligated to work during the planting and harvest season. She might also be required to do the laundry at the farm and to weave cloth and sew garments for the farmer and his family. Close to Christmas, during and after the butchering, she was responsible for the handling and preservation of the meat and fish[45]. All the parts of the animal were used; nothing went to waste. The tallow was used to make candles, the intestines were used as casing of the sausages, the blood was used for *klubb*,[46] and so on.

The children

The children did what they were told to do, working at home or working on the farm. When they worked on the farm they were never paid. Older children were responsible for looking after their younger siblings. They helped their mother with chores, and might be the ones who took the milk and eggs to be sold. Most of the children went to school a few days a week. Exhaustion both for adults and children was common due to overwork and lack of proper nutrition. There were often

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[45] Preservation of food was done by drying, smoking, salting, and preservation by lye – as in *Lutefisk*. The wife would also make flatbread of the rye flour; a bread with no yeast that was preserved by being kept dry.

[46] *Klubb* is a local dish made of pig's blood, potatoes, lard and rye flour. It is formed into large balls and boiled in water. When served it is cut into pieces and eaten with sugar. This meal is an excellent source of iron and energy very much welcomed during the dark season of the year.

shortages of almost everything important to a young child: food, clothing, playthings, time for play and sometimes affection.[47]

Social status

The social status of the crofters varied. The fields were hard to manage in the western and northern parts of Norway. In these areas the fields were among fjords and steep valleys. The crofter's holdings were very small in these areas. Many of the farms there were only as big as some of the larger crofter's holdings in eastern Norway where the land was flatter and conducive to larger fields and farms. The social difference between the farmer and the crofter could be minute in Western and Northern Norway since the socio-economic difference was very small. It was common for the two social groups to interact both during work and leisure. In the eastern parts however, the differences were more marked. Here the farms could be very large and some farmers had up to 20 crofter's holdings tied to their farm. The farmers were quite often economically well off and the crofters were usually poor. The two groups clearly belonged in two different classes.

Derogatory comments aimed at the crofter class could be heard. If a non-crofter girl married a son of a crofter the comments would very often be "Well, she just could not find anyone better." There was also a marked difference when it came to where a farmer and a crofter were to be buried. Not all the areas of the churchyard were as attractive as other areas. The least attractive area was usually to the north, and this was where the crofters and the poor people were buried.[48] A

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[47] Floyd M. Martinson, Growing up in Norway 800-1990 (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), 46.

[48] Hovdehaugen, Husmannstida, 96.

crofter's son writes about his memories as a child: "There was a gap between the crofters and the farmers. A crofter was never elected to hold a public position, mostly because he was 'only' a crofter and did not have any knowledge about anything. We children once in a while were reminded that we were crofter kids. *Husmannsunge* – crofter kid – was a social slur."[49]

There were four factors that determined the social standing of all the citizens of a rural community: family background, economy, the size of the farm, and the status of ownership. The class difference differed from man to man, farm-to-farm and area-to-area. As the number of crofters increased, the new crofters had access to crofter's holdings of decreasing size and quality. Hence, many of the crofters fell into deep poverty. The social differences between farmers and crofters were greatest just prior to the first major wave of emigration to North America. The emigration came as a release valve for a heavily overpopulated agricultural society. After many of the crofters had literally fled the country, the surplus of manpower was reduced and the remaining crofters became more independent and gained a somewhat increased social respect. Many of the crofters moved away from their crofter's holdings and bought houses in the growing towns and cities where they now had other work opportunities.

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[49] Semmingsen, ed., Husmannsminner, 183.

Figure 5. The average age of the crofters rose during the early part of the twentieth century as very few young people chose to become crofters. This is a picture from the crofter's holding Sandbekken, under the farm Vestre Rud in Nittedal. It was established in the mid 1800s. The picture was taken in front of the barn sometime in the 1920s. To the left and in the middle are the siblings Dina and Hans Sandbekken who were still part of the diminishing crofter group. To the right is Jacob Torgersen. He was born on the crofter's holding Øgarn, under the farm Rud, and owned this farm for a few years at the turn of the century. He lived with Dina and Hans Sanbekken during his later years The photo belongs to Per Ruud.

Source: Nittedal Historielag[50]

A new life

Agriculture became more mechanized in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The farmers then became less and less dependent on the manual labor of the crofters. The Ministry of Agriculture distributed a survey concerning the institution of crofters to the various communities in 1917.[51] One of the questions the Ministry was seeking an answer to was why the crofter class was decreasing in number. The returned surveys showed that crofters felt that the work that was required by their contract was too burdensome, and they thought the institution itself was too un-free. The crofters also thought they were viewed as socially less worthy human beings.

[50] Nittedal Historielag, "Nittedal i gamledager," Nittedal Gullsmie, http://gullsmed.net/nittlokalhistorie.htm, 09.13.2005

[51] Semmingsen, Husmannsminner, 5.

They emphasized that the crofter was not guaranteed the fruits of his labor, that his position as he grew older was uncertain, and that his economical condition was generally poorer than the conditions and wages of other trades could offer. This view represented all crofters all over the country. The farmers, however, claimed that the crofters were expensive labor and that their fire wood and grazing rights had become too heavy a burden. The farmers who owned and kept up the houses of the crofters found that this maintenance had become too costly. In the western and southern parts of the country where both the farms and the crofter's holdings were small, the farmers found it beneficial to include old crofter's holdings in the main farm. Chores like collecting leaves and other feed for the animals had been eliminated, and new machines were able to do a lot of the daily workload. Therefore, they now needed the crofters far less than before and had a greater need to use the crofter holdings soil more.

As in the agricultural sector, big changes were also occurring in the industrial sector. New work opportunities were created and there was a shift in the need for manpower from the rural areas to the urban areas. Many young people preferred these new industrial jobs to becoming crofters. Others applied to schools like teacher's colleges and officer training schools which would make them more qualified to meet the increasingly advanced society. Yet others found their way to North America. A survey from a municipality in Gudbrandsdalen spanning 1850-1910 showed that five out of six emigrants came from the crofter class, and only one

sixth came from the farmer class.[52] A study from Numedal showed that 115 of 815 crofter's holdings were abandoned because the last crofter family who had lived there emigrated to North America.[53]

What happened to the old crofter's holdings after they were abandoned? The majority were incorporated into the main farm and cultivated together with its land. Some were sold to the crofters as their own deeded user units. *Arbeiderbruk-og Boligbanken* was established in 1903 by the government. This new lending institution gave larger loans, longer terms, and lower interest rates than other banks. The law concerning the *Arbeiderbruk-og Boligbanken* represented a new standard of support of the new freeholders. In 1915 the government established *Småbruk- og Bustadbanken* which took over the role of the *Arbeiderbruk-og Boligbanken*. It served as a central lending institution which helped the crofters to finance the purchase of their crofter's holdings. The Land Act of 1928 gave crofters the option of claiming ownership of their crofter's holdings through involuntary relinquishment or expropriation. But many crofter's holdings, especially the ones that were located in desolate areas were abandoned and became overgrown.

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[52] Hovdehaugen, Husmmanstida, 108.
[53] Semmingsen, Husmannsminner, 98.

Chapter 4: Agricultural Change in Norway

At the dawn of the nineteenth century Norway had a pre-industrial society in which about eighty percent of the population of 883,600 was tied to agriculture. Farming was supplemented with fishing along the coast and in others areas with forestry. Farmers were using the same farming techniques and tools as generations had before them. These were simple and required substantial physical strength. Rural culture was dominated by an interdependency of the population. The farmers were dependant on their crofters and day laborers for their work effort and loyalty. In return the crofters and day laborers were dependant on the farmers to give them work and, in the case of the crofters, housing.

In the 1850s and 60s the old ways of operation and ownership appeared to have reached their peak. Never had so many people made a living from farming as then. In the southern and western areas of Norway, new farms were created when brothers (seldom sisters) split up the family farm into multiple units. The number of farm units increased in eastern Norway and Trøndelag because of new crofter's holdings. In 1855 there were 113,204 farmers and 65,060 crofters with land recorded, compared to 77,810 farmers and 39,972 crofters with land in 1801.[54] But there were limits as to how small the farm units could be. Norway's rapid population increase had created a resource crises, and the country was forced to make significant social changes.

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[54]S. Dyrvik, et. al, eds, Norsk økonomisk Historie 1500-1850, 186 and 195.

Det Store Hamskiftet

(The Big Molt)

A significant change in the methods and importance of agriculture started in the mid nineteenth century. Norway had previously been characterized by a labor intensive and primitive type of crop farming based on self-sufficiency. This was now changing to a more commercial and money oriented agricultural industry. There was a variety of factors that both influenced and resulted from this change. Mechanical and technological progress in farm machinery along with higher levels of education and new farming methods led to better utilization of available arable land. This caused a growth in production and higher crop yield per agricultural worker. The increased import of foreign grains and increased interest in husbandry resulted in a decreased need for labor on the farm fields. There was a rise in the number of community organizations. They were addressing concerns of both social and land ownership and agricultural politics became a stronger focus for the government. The rapidly changing society required an improved infrastructure that aided in both urbanization and transport of agricultural, forestry, fishing, and mining goods to new internal (the growing towns and cities in Norway) and external (European countries) markets. Eventually there was a change in land ownership that enabled many of the few remaining crofters to become freeholders.

All these changes contributed to the demise of the crofter culture. They came into play in a different order, at different times, and in a varied tempo from area to area. In the eastern parts of Norway the shift began gradually in the mid 1800s, but it could be witnessed as late as the 1920s and 30s in northern Norway. These

deep-rooted changes were termed *'Det Store Hamskiftet'* or 'The Big Molt' by the poet Inge Krokann in 1942. Krokann realized that the change from an economy based on a predominantly self-sufficiency in agriculture to a market based economy also had a great affect on Norway's society culturally, socially and economically. Norwegian agriculture had molted or shed its old confining shell and allowed it to be replaced by a more flexible skin that tolerated new growth and new agricultural trends. The basis for his statements was the breakthrough of free trade and the new technological inventions that were "followed by a constant expanding industry and hence bigger and bigger and more and more towns is a natural consequence".[55] The expression *'Det Store Hamskiftet'* is as suggestive and powerful term in Norwegian history as *'The Great Depression'* is in American history.

Mechanical and technological progress in farm machinery

Industrialization stimulated the production of mechanized farm machinery and the beginning of a modern type of agriculture. Ploughs with iron-plated shares, harrows with iron tines, seed drills, and threshing machines gradually came into use. From the 1870s the mechanical harvester made its breakthrough. These new inventions lowered the demand for farm labor. The farmer could now do his work with only a few extra hired hands (mainly seasonally) and the need for the crofter declined.

In Trøgstad the agricultural tools were primitive long after 1814. The spade was the only tool for hand use. Later tools like grub axes, rakes, and pitchforks were

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[55] Inge Krokann, Det Store Hamskiftet i Bondesamfunnet, 2. utgåva (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1976), 121.

commonly used. The plow was made of wood and the ploughshare was made of iron. The harrow had straight tines made of iron as well. To break up lumps of dirt a large mallet made of wood was used and was later replaced by the *konkestokk*. A *konkestokk* or a leveler was a large, heavy tree trunk that was pulled behind a horse to break up lumps and smooth out the soil on the fields. It was not until 1840 that the disk harrow was used, and around 1850 a harrow with bent tines, the *kroktindharv*, and a harrow with wider triangular shaped tine ends, the *labbeharv*, became available.

Figure 6. Husband and wife during the harvest, Malvik. Before the introduction of modern farm equipment the harvest was both time consuming and labor intensive. Both crofter men and women were commonly required to work during the busy harvest season.
Source: Historielaget Hommelviks Venner [56]

The machinery and tools that were used in the harvest saw an equally slow advancement. For the cutting of the hay a scythe was used. Initially a sickle was used for the harvesting of the grains, then later a cradle. The first mower was

[56] http://www.malvik.kommune.no

brought to Trøgstad in 1874, and this was an occasion of very great importance.[57] Traditionally, a flail had been used for the threshing of grains. A flail was a blunt beating tool used to thrash or separate the grain from the straw. It was a deceptively simple tool. Two lengths of wood were hinged by a loop of rope. The longest length or staff was swung to cause the beater to strike flat on the ground across a layer of cut straw, separating the grain. The grain settled on to a straw mat on the barn floor. Two people worked facing each other, the oats, rye, wheat, or barley between them on the barn floor. The flail was designed for repetitive action.

Figure 7. Flail and shaker. Photo: Ivar Hopen, 2001.
Source: Yrjar Heimbygdslag[58]

Threshing often lasted for the duration of the winter and was commonly the responsibility of the crofters. The first reaping machine was the so-called *slagmaskin*; it had a wooden cylinder with an advanced wood tooth design powered

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[57] Hans Veiby, Trøgstad Herred 1814-1914: Bidrag til en bygdebeskrivelse (Fredrikshald: E. Sem, 1914), 32.

[58] http://www.museumsnett.no/yrjarheimbygdslag

by hand cranking. It knocked loose the grain from the straw, but it did not separate the chaff from the kernels. This was generally done by throwing the grain, remaining straw and all other residue, using a shovel, across the barn floor toward a wall. The chaff would fall down before it reached the wall and the kernels would end up in a big pile by the wall. The new reaping machine was a big improvement compared to the manually used flail, but it was slow in comparison to the later threshing machines.

In 1875 twenty-seven mowers existed in Trøgstad and they gained in popularity quickly. In 1890 the number had risen to 138 and in 1907 there were 265. By 1910 Trøgstad had a total of 314 mowers. A new invention, the binder, gave the mower some competition and by 1914, four were brought to Trøgstad. The earliest use of the seed drill in this community was just prior to 1890 as three were listed in the agricultural census that year. In 1900 this number rose to twenty-two and sixty-seven in 1907. In 1880 the hay rake pulled by horses was rare, but in 1907, 249 were counted in Trøgstad. By 1914 the plows used were large and made of iron "and it was not uncommon to see them being pulled by three strong horses," Hans Veiby wrote in Trøgstad Herred 1814-1914, and "the harrows were almost exclusively built of iron as well."[59] By this date most all threshing was done by threshing machines run by gasoline motors, with four operating in the community, two of which were owned by a local co-op.

[59] Veiby, Trøgstad Herred 1814-1914: Bidrag til en bygdebeskrivelse , 33.

Figure 8. A coffee break by the mower during the harvest season. Marie Haugset brought coffee for the farmer Åsmund Haugland (1899-1936)(in the middle) and his farm help. The mower was a great improvement over and far more efficient than the scythe. The photographer was Andreas Olsen Røsje.

Source: Egge Museum[60]

The consistent shift from using manual tools that required a large number of crofters to efficient, mechanized agricultural machinery caused a decrease in demand for farm labor. The crofters' main purpose was vanishing and hence number of crofters declined.

Higher levels of education

Norway had had an organized school system since the twelfth century. Cathedral schools were established in Trondheim, Bergen, and Oslo for the education of priests. During the sixteenth century these Cathedral schools became "Latin" schools, and it was ordered that every merchant center, or town, should have one. All children in these communities were to be educated in Christianity. During

[60] http://www.eggemuseum.no

the eighteenth century the central administration consisting of the nobility and major merchants, finally gained a serious interest in both education and child rearing. The public schools educated the children in Christianity, reading, and mathematics, but the latter two subjects were voluntary. Hence illiteracy was common well into the nineteenth century, because these schools were limited tot he towns. After 1814 there was an increased demand that the public schools should be improved. This resulted in a law in 1827 that mandated public schools in all rural areas, in addition to the schools that were already in the towns. All children from the age of seven to eight years were obligated to attend school until they reached the age of confirmation, about fourteen or fifteen. Each child was required to receive two months of education each year. In 1848 a new law mandated that the town schools should include subjects like home economics for the girls and physical education for the boys. In many towns the children attended school from eighteen to twenty-four hours each week, and the school year was forty-five weeks long. By 1889 a steady improvement of the school system had occurred, and as a result public schooling for all layers of society was established. There were separate rules for the rural and urban schools, but both required all children ages seven through fourteen to attend school. In the rural areas the school year was expanded to twelve weeks that later increased, and in the towns children attended schools for forty weeks each year. All children were required to learn how to read and write.[61]

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[61] Olaf Kortner, Preben Munthe and Egil Tveterås, eds. Aschehoug og Gyldendals Store Norske Leksikon (Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget, 1983), s.v. "Norge; Skole og Utdanning," by Olaf Kortner.

This increased level of education resulted in a higher social knowledge among the population both in the urban and rural areas. Since all children were given the same opportunity for education, the crofter class was one of the social groups that had the most to gain. The decrease of illiteracy gave social reformers like Marcus Thrane (see page 59) an opportunity to reach the crofters and the laborers with their message of equal social rights.

Norway got its first university in 1811. Several years went by without any new university level institutions being created. In 1859 the College of Agriculture was established in Ås, Akershus. It was first and foremost an institution of agricultural education. Efficiency in agriculture had become a major concern of the farmers, and the college was a great source of information and instruction. As a result of the college's reorganization during the 1890s research became its primary focus from 1897 and on. A Ministry of Agriculture was established in 1900. The following year the Agricultural High School was launched as an institution for both instruction and research, headed by a director who urged the need 'to think big for once, even when it is the peasant who is under consideration.'[62]

The farmers now had a national center for agricultural knowledge tailored to Norwegian conditions and used this source to aid their quest for more efficient and cost effective agricultural practices. This new trend moved the focus away from the need for crofters and toward larger operations with modern farm machinery.

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[62] Derry, A History of Modern Norway 1814-1972, 185.

New farming methods and better utilization of arable land

When the farmers and crofters co-existed and co-farmed the rural areas the fields were numerous, small, and separated. Tending to these small fields required a lot of work. The new farm machinery proved to be more efficient when used for larger, connected areas of land. The cost was high compared to the old horse drawn equipment, but the new machinery far outperformed the old. With the improved machinery and better knowledge gained by the improved education about efficient agricultural practices, it was beneficial for the farmers to clear more land to connect their fields, including the fields of the crofter's holdings. As a result of these changes there were both an overall increased production of crops and the crop yield per agricultural worker rose. There was a shift in agriculture from self-sufficiency to specialized production. Farmers were now able to meet the demands of a growing market economy.

In the beginning of the 1850s the grain production was high due to favorable weather conditions. The price of grain rose as the supply of grain from Russia declined due to the Crimean War. Many came to see farmland as a valuable commodity, especially in the large grain producing communities in the eastern parts of Norway. Farmers were confident when they borrowed money from newly established credit institutions to invest in new farm equipment and machinery. Many of these farmers went bankrupt during the agricultural crises in 1857. There were below average yields in grain production from 1859 on, compounded repeated flooding in the early 1860s. In addition grain from North America and once again

from the areas in Russia surrounding the Black Sea was less expensive than the grain produced anywhere in Europe.

When farmers saw the advantage of incorporating the fields of crofter's holdings into their own operation, many crofters had no choice but to find employment elsewhere, mainly in the growing urban areas. The farmers were also forced to explore alternate ways of operating a profitable and viable, less labor intensive agriculture which also lessened the need for crofters .

Increased interest in husbandry

Until the middle of the nineteenth century the care and maintenance of cattle had been of low priority. Cows were given straw and the lowest quality of the hay. The best hay was given in the stable to horses. Horses were needed for work in the fields, in the forest, and for transportation and were viewed as more valuable than cattle. What little fodder that was used in the cow-stable was made of oat flour and was mixed in with water. The results were lean cows and poor milk and meat production.[63]

The farmers' dependency on the crofters was lessened when there was an increased interest in husbandry both for meat and milk production. This occurred during the same timeframe when the quality of agriculture improved. The farmers came to realize that by focusing more on their cattle they could supplement a substantial source of their income and hence made adjustments accordingly. The cow-stable had traditionally been both dark and cold, but now efforts were made to improve its quality by adding windows and making it warm. The walls were painted

[63] Veiby, Trøgstad Herred 1814-1914, 37.

white to give the cow-stable a brighter appearance. Extra care was being made to make the sure the animals stayed clean and dry.[64] Fields that had been cultivated for grain production were now being made into pastures and used for grass for silage. The maintenance on these fields required less labor than the grain producing fields.

Rise of community organizations and agricultural politics

In the traditional farming communities, where people relied on each other both socially and economically, family and neighbors were of great importance. The shift of emphasis in farming also led to new ways of living and thinking. The old farm and neighbor society, with its communal spirit in work and leisure, dissolved. But gradually the farmers came to understand that under these new conditions cooperation was essential. Agriculturally dominated savings banks, insurance companies, purchasing cooperatives, slaughter houses, and dairies appeared in almost every rural district. As external trade became increasingly important for a healthy and viable agricultural economy, it was essential that the farmers had an efficient developed network to handle the management, sale, and transport of goods and services. As the farmer society became increasingly integrated with the market economy, the traditional rural communal partnerships were dissolving. There was a growing interest in the national issues discussed by the Storting[65] and its cabinet. The Storting no longer saw it beneficial for agriculture to keep a local autonomy and low levels of governmental involvement in local politics. The changing social and

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[64] Ibid, 38.
[65] The Storting is Norway's governing body with elected representatives.

economic conditions resulting from *det store hamskiftet* were reflected in a new trend in agricultural politics.

New alliances were formed on the political stage. Farmers from large farms, mainly from the eastern parts of Norway, partnered themselves with the nobility, wealthy merchants, and the state functionaries in support of the traditional, functionally controlled political system. This upper class group was dominant. The farmers from small and medium sized farms united themselves with the new middle class of teachers, lawyers, and local functionaries etc. to oppose the old regime. The support for the middle class grew throughout Norway, both in the rural and urban areas.[66]

The first *Bondevennforening* (Farmer's Friend Society) was founded in Mandal, Vest-Agder in 1865 by Søren Jaabæk. Søren Jaabæk was a long time member of the Storting (1845-91), and was a former farmer and teacher.[67] *Bondevennene* were in opposition to the Norwegian nobility and was the first organized voter's group in Norway. Their goal was to improve the relationship between the nobility and the farmers and give the local communities more power.

The focus of the political community was on the farmers and their future; not to maintain the institution of crofters. The political trend moved towards support of private ownership of land through state controlled lending institutions and eventually the legal right for the crofters to buy their crofter's holdings and become independent farmers.

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[66] Tor Dagre, "The History of Norway", Norinform.

[67] Arkivverket, "Søren Jaabæk," Arkivverket, Statsarkivet i Kristiansand, 04.05.2003, www.riksarkivet.no/kristiansand/smakebiter/kjente/politikere/jaabek.html, 09.13.2004.

Improved infrastructure

As trade and transportation expanded during the 1840s, it sparked an interest in the building of a railroad for transportation of both passengers and goods. In 1851 the Storting approved an offer from an English company to build a railroad from Kristiania (Oslo) to Eidsvold. The railroad was to be operated privately with fifty percent English and twenty-five percent Norwegian private capital and twenty-five percent Norwegian public funds. When the line opened in 1854 it was sixty-eight kilometers long and had a price tag of 2.2 million *Spesidaler*. The railroad was a huge success. Within the first year it carried 128,000 passengers and 83,000 metric tons (91,300 US tons) of timber. Based on the line's success several other lines were planned and built.

A network of lines started to emerge. In 1868 the Randsfjordbanen, a line from Drammen to Randsfjord, was opened. During the 1870s six more lines were under construction. The building of these railroads employed a total of 11,000 workers, most of whom came from the crofter class. The first line that connected a greater part of the country was Rørosbanen that was completed in 1877 and ran from Hamar to Trondheim.[68] With the improving ways to transport agricultural products for sale in different areas both nationally and internationally, the farmers had a greater incentive to increase their production.

A steady improvement of all types of infrastructure was seen spreading from the cities and towns. The new and better roads, the developing railroad network, an

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[68]Njål Svingheim, "Jernbanen i Norge fylte 150 år i 2004," Jernbaneverket, July 28, 2004, www.jernbaneverket.no/jernbanenettet/Historie/article.jhtml?articleID=1139481, 09.13.2004.

ever improving mail system, and the telegraph were not only local service routes for rural Norway, but became the main arteries for the whole country. This new network of infrastructure was essential for the growing industrial centers. Both workers, many who were from the crofter class, for the new factories and agricultural products needed for the growing, urban population could easily be transported from the rural areas. In return, products from the factories (new farm machinery) and imported products (grain) were easily shipped to the rural areas which both lessened the need for the traditional crofter labor.

Urbanization – a new, national market for agricultural products

When the crofters' economical situation steadily declined and their importance in the agricultural environment diminished, many chose to seek a better way of making a living. Many of the crofters gravitated towards the developing manufacturing industries in the growing urban areas. Norway continued to have a steady population growth (see Table 2 on page 28) and by 1930 almost half (47 percent) of the population lived in urban areas. The residents of the growing towns were dependent on the farming, fishing, and logging communities to supply them with everyday products like food, building, and industrial raw materials.

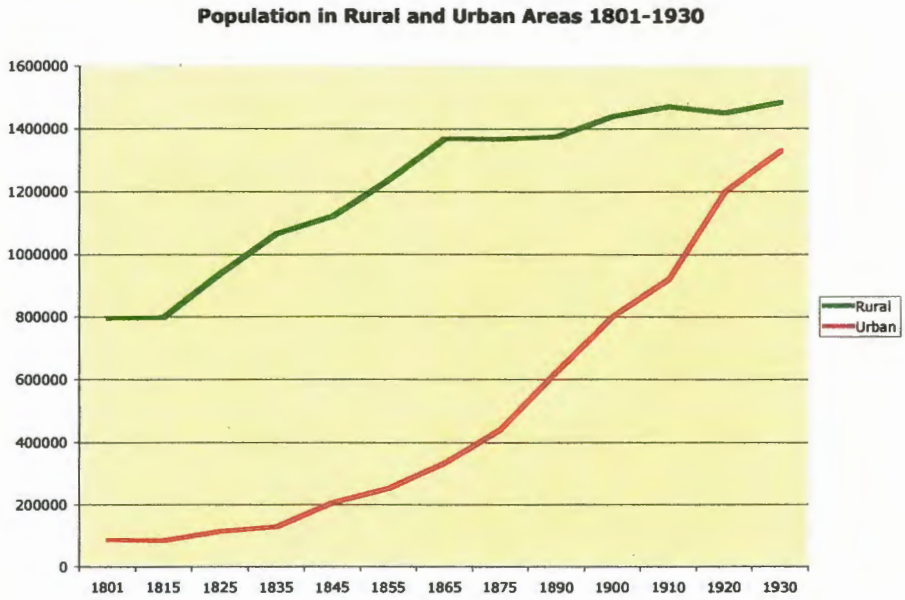

Table 4. Source: Population censuses. Statistisk Sentralbyrå

Other unemployed crofters sought their fortune in the pioneer areas of North America where they could continue to work in agriculture. In America they did not have to work for a farmer but were able to own their own land. Thousands upon thousands of people left the country, and as a result the supply of cheap manpower declined. There will be a more detailed look at the impacts on the crofter culture in the chapter on emigra tion.

Det Store Hamskiftet was first and foremost a change in Norway's identity. Not only did agriculture see drastic improvements, but also society as a whole gained a new look. The upper class and the farmers had been the major landowners until the end of the nineteenth century. With the improved system of credit crofters were able to buy their crofter's holdings and become independent landowners. The impact and the importance of the Land Act of 1928 will be discussed in the chapter on land reform.

Chapter 5: Emigration

The initial voyage

Cleng Peerson (1783-1865) was "the father of Norwegian emigration." He sailed to America in 1821 and returned to Norway to take part in the organization of the initial party of emigrants who left Norway on July 4, 1825. Later he served as a guide and helper for Norwegians immigrating to America. *Restaurationen* was the very first Norwegian emigrant vessel. The ship brought a group of 52 Norwegian emigrants from Stavanger in 1825. A child was born on the journey and they had become 53 before entering the New York harbor. The vessel was most likely the smallest ever to cross the Atlantic with emigrants. The 53 emigrants founded the first Norwegian settlement near Buffalo, New York. The weather conditions here were very harsh, so the group moved their settlement to Illinois. The settlement, later a town, became know as Norway and is located about fifteen miles from Morris, Illinois. Although ten years passed before the next group of Norwegian emigrants crossed the Atlantic ocean, this was the start of a population movement only Ireland could compete with.[69] More than eight hundred thousand Norwegians sailed to America in the period 1825-1939,[70] almost half of the population growth during the same period.

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[69]Digitalarkivet, "The Norwegian emigration - 175 years," Norwegian Emigration to USA, 1825-2000 ,http://digitalarkivet.uib.no/utstilling/eng/main.htm, 11.03.2004.

70 Statistisk Sentralbyrå, Utvandringsstatestikk, www.ssb.no

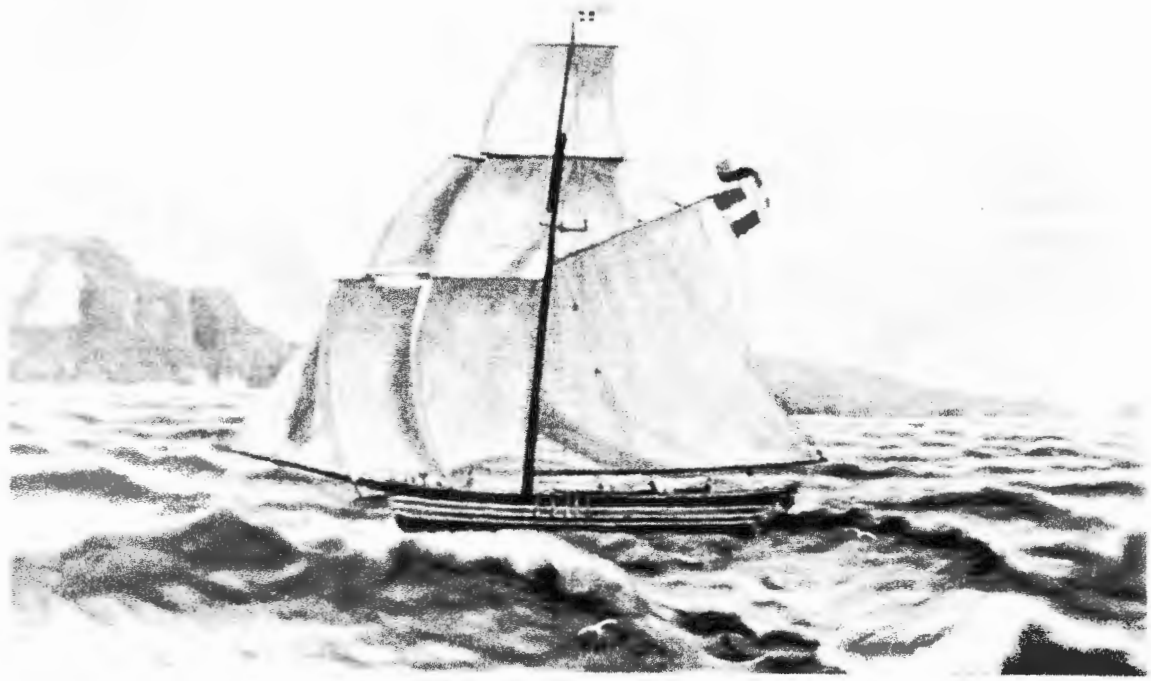

Figure 9. *Restaurationen*

Source: Digitalarkivet[71]

The promised land

After the American Civil War, the United States experienced an enormous economic growth. New regions were opened up to settlement, and the Homestead Act of 1862 made free land available. There was a huge demand for labor and for settlers to develop the immense western land areas. The timing was ideal for many of the Norwegian crofters whose future was uncertain. The majority of the emigrants were freeholders,[72] but crofters also used emigration as the perfect solution for the quest for an improved life.

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Ingrid Semmingsen, Norway to America A history of the Migration, (University of Minnesota Press, 1978), 38.

Figure 10. Den yngste sønns avskjed (The youngest son's farewell) (1867), Adolph Tidemand. Source: O. Væring Efff. AS.

How did this news make its way to the crofters in rural Norway? The most important source of information were the '*Amerika Brevene*' – the 'American Letters,' letters that Norwegians already in America wrote home to relatives, friends, and acquaintances. These letters painted a very positive picture of the pioneer areas. "They told about freedom and equality; in America common people need not bow to officials and their "betters' in society. "As soon as a man is known to be decent and honest, then one is as much respected as the other, crofter and craftsman just as much as merchants and officials," an immigrant wrote from Wisconsin in 1845."[73] These letters along with prepaid tickets from relatives and friends in America encouraged the crofters to emigrate so the majority of the emigrants came from the overpopulated rural areas. During some years as many as forty percent of all

[73] Odd S. Lovoll, The Promise of America, A History of the Norwegian-American People (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press1983), 12.

emigrants received their tickets from America.[74] A survey from a municipality in Gudbrandsdalen spanning 1850-1910 showed that five out of six emigrants came from the crofter class, and only one sixth came from the farmer class.[75] Since there were few alternatives to agricultural work it was with little or no choice that many of the crofters left Norway. The assurance of a better life convinced many hopeful Norwegians to board a ship headed for the United States. Sometimes whole families would leave together. This was common until the 1870s. Others would leave by themselves. There was a shift towards individual emigration in the 1870s when the overcrowding of the rural areas lessened.[76] Everything had to be sold before they left. Furniture, household items, the cow, pig, and sheep were all auctioned off. They packed up their few remaining belongings, kissed loved ones good-bye, and prayed for a better life in *det løfterike landet* – the promised land.

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[74] Ibid.
[75] Hovdehaugen, Husmmanstida, 108.
[76] Arne Sandem, Husmannsvesenet i Østfold, 12.

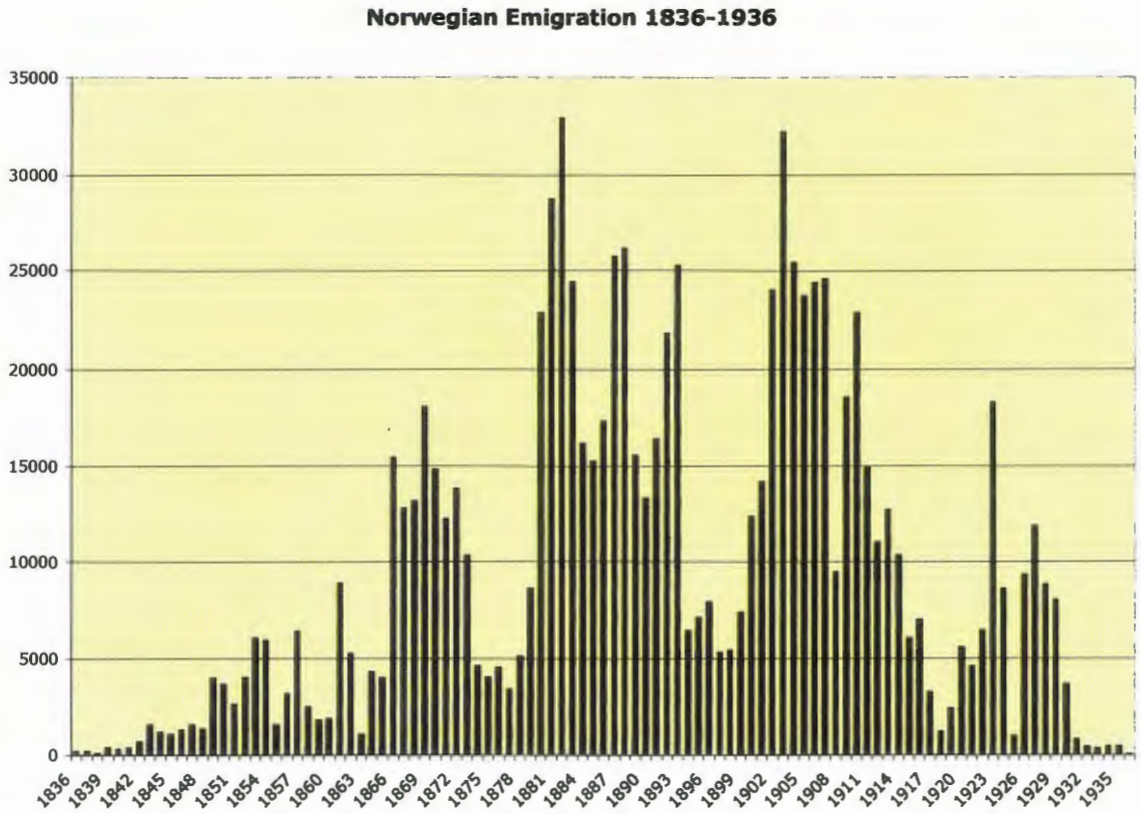

Table 5. Source: Statistisk sentralbyrå [77]

The exodus

There were three major waves of emigration. The initial phase of notable emigration during the 1840s and 50s was a result of the need for alternative ways of living for the rapidly growing population as seen in Table 2 on page 28. The rural areas were becoming overpopulated, and there were not enough established crofter's holdings, nor enough need for extra farm help to employ all members of the rapidly growing crofter class. As the resources were being spread very thin among the crofters, many took the necessary leap of faith and fled the country.

[77]Statistisk sentralbyrå, "Utvandringsstatestikk," www.ssb.no, 11.03.2004.

Figure 11. Utvandrere (Emigrants) (excerpt)(1900), Gustav Wentzel.
Source: O. Værings eftf. AS

Overpopulation was also behind the first major wave of emigration that started around 1865. This corresponded with the peak year of the number of Norwegian crofters – 65,060 (see Table 1, page 26). In addition to the need for employment, an increased level of social awareness and political ideas of class rights from Europe acted as fuel to the fire. Marcus Thrane, Norway's first true social and labor reform activist, was inspired by the message of equality boosted by the February Revolution of 1848 and had quickly gained a following from the crofter class as well as the emerging labor class.[78] Crofters were starting to see alternatives to a life of struggle and little means in rural Norway, and the dream and promise of both economical and social equality conveyed by Norwegians in America was enough to convince thousands, upon thousands of crofters to settle in 'the

[78] Marcus Thrane (1817-1890) and his cause will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6, Social and economic reform.

promised land.' Many potential emigrants would probably have left earlier than the mid 1860s, but postponed their departure because of the Civil War in America. A third, and maybe the major cause, was the Norwegian grain crisis that followed the productive years of the 1850s as discussed in the previous chapter.

There was a calmer period between 1873-80 which corresponded with the "Panic of 1873" when the postwar boom ended in America.[79] Emigration was closely tied to the market fluctuations in the United States. As the American economy started to recover around 1880, so did the number of Norwegian emigrants. During this second wave of mass emigration from 1880-93 an average of 18,900 Norwegians left annually.[80] As shown in Table 2 'Population in Norway 1801 to 1930' on page 28, rural population growth had slowed down in contrast to the national population growth. This was caused by the rural emigration to both the urban areas and to foreign ports. The economic depression that hit America in 1893 once again slowed down the need for new manpower, and Norwegian emigration once again lessened.

The third wave occurred from 1900-14 when 214,985 Norwegians left the country.[81] After 1905 the Norwegian authorities asked the emigrants their reason for leaving. Almost ninety percent of the men and about seventy percent of the women said they left because they were not able to find profitable employment in Norway.[82] The new industries were not able to create new jobs fast enough to meet the increasing need for employment.

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[79] Lovoll, The Promise of America, A History of the Norwegian-American People, 11.
[80] Stateistisk Sentralbyrå, "Utvandringsstatestikk.'
[81] Ibid.
[82] Lovoll, The Promise of America, A History of the Norwegian-American People, 12.

Figure 12. Postcard from the beginning of the 1900s that promoted emigration.
Source: Amerika Kofferten[83]

There was a decrease in the number of emigrants in the years around the First World War when Norwegian agricultural production rose to an all time high.[84] But with the dawn of the Great Depression in the beginning of the 1920s came a price decline of agricultural products and considerable marketing problems arose. Interest rates and installment payments for agricultural loans were not reduced and many of the newly established farmers, especially crofters turned smallholders, were forced to abandon their farms. Between 1921-35 up to fifty thousand farms were sold as the result of foreclosures.[85] Some of the farmers were able to buy back their holdings with less debt, but the threat of loosing everything loomed overhead as it did for many thousands of other farmers. The individual farmers tried to produce

[83]Siv Ringdal, "Utvandring," Amerika Kofferten, www.amerikakofferten.no/ drommen.html, 11.05.2004.
[84] Statistisk Sentralbyrå, Historisk Statestikk 1978 (Oslo, 1978), Tabell 86, Avling i jordbruket (Yields in agriculture), 142.
[85] T. K. Derry, A History of Modern Norway 1814-1972 (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1973), 309.

more in order to cover their costs. Overproduction grew, and the prices fell even more. Once again the young people in the farming communities fled the country, seeking their fortune in the United States and Canada.

Home is where the heart is

Anders Fjeldstad, an agricultural representative for Norway in Europe, wrote in his yearly report for 1922: "The unemployment is the biggest ghost which has resulted from the war. In the meantime we rely on government created jobs that are more or less productive.... But when one no longer can keep these government created jobs going, - well, then emigration is the only alternative. But this is certainly a fatal solution... the country's rural youth is exported, and the production means of the country remains untouched." He then went on to quote an article from Morgenbladet, written by Sigval Bergesen, 17 March 1922:

> "This week our country exports about 200 of our best youth. This valuable export occurs mainly among the rural youth and from the country's southern parts that have the most favorable climate and most productive soil. But what help are all these favorable, natural resources which are granted us, when we do not obtain the needed infrastructure to utilize these wonders of nature? We see the following: our strongest rural youth is forced to leave the country."[86]

This last small wave of emigration was short lived, mainly because of the Great Depression. America was no longer as full of promise as it had been for

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[86] Beretninger fra Landbruksfunksjonærer i Utlandet for 1922 (Kristiania: Grøndal & Søns Boktrykkeri, 1923), 36-7.

decades earlier and a future of Norway was promising. More opportunities became available in Norway as the manufacturing industries had steadily increased in numbers and size. The children of crofters were now choosing to relocate closer to home by moving to Norway's rapidly growing cities. By 1930 forty-seven percent of Norway's population lived and were employed in the urban areas.

Emigration, along with industrialization, is listed as one of the primary factors that caused the end of the crofter class in most of the sources I read. I see emigration not as a cause of the demise of the crofter class, but as an effect of a rural society that was bursting at its rims. The farmers' lessened need for the crofters after acquiring modern farm equipment and the rapid crowding of the farming communities were, in my opinion, the reasons for the mass emigration that led to the demise of the crofters.

Chapter 6: Social and economic reform

The nineteenth century was a time of big changes for the Norwegian society. We have seen how agriculture became mechanized and more efficient, how the population grew and forced migrations both to towns and to lands far away, and how the citizens of Norway, both affluent and poor, were gaining more knowledge about society and economic opportunities. These trends forced Norway to move along with the rest of Europe, and governmental officials (early on the ruling King and state functionaries, later the elected politicians) were forced to follow suit by enacting laws that were aimed at increasing the social rights and improve the economic situation for among others, the crofter class. Although not always successful, this new way of thinking eventually led to the Crofter Act of 1928, which idea had been brought to light almost 200 years earlier.

Husmannsloven

(The Crofter's Act)

King Frederik V ordered that a crofter's law was to be carried out ca. 1750. The law established that all crofters were entitled to a written contract with the farmer. It required the farmers to give their crofters the right to their dwelling on the crofter's holding, and that the lease agreement should be publicly recorded.[87] During this period, the government headed by the King and his appointed state functionaries were not especially supportive of the farmers, but rather the merchants. The farmers were forced to sell their products at very low prices and in return had to pay inflated prices for products bought from the merchants. I have not

[87] Sandem, Husmannsvesenet i Østfold, 11.

been able to find the reason behind the initial crofter's law. Maybe it was just another way of the King to control his citizens. However, the crofter's law caused a lot of dismay among both farmers and estate owners, and as few as two years later the government had to retract the order. It was then announced that nobody had to give their crofters lease agreements unless the crofter himself had cleared and built the crofter's holding.[88] By 1792, it was decided that anyone who became a crofter on a farm should receive a written description of all his work responsibilities. In spite of all these rules ordered by the King, many crofters continued to be forced to make do with oral contracts, even if they had been the one to clear and establish their own crofter's holding.[89]

In 1851 the crofters once again became the beneficiaries of an act when the Storting passed the Crofter's Act – *Husmannsloven.*[90] It was more or less a repetition of the initial crofter's law King Frederik V had ordered a century earlier: every landed crofter was to be given a lifelong lease of his holding. The work responsibilities on the farm became regulated, and the crofters gained credit for the improvements they had preformed at the crofter's holding. The census of 1845 had revealed that 46,000 people, or 3.5 percent of the population, were either wholly or partly supported by public funds, and the government became concerned. The thought might have been that by giving the crofters more right to their land, they would continue their work on the farms and not need public funds for support. The increasing signs of unrest among particularly the crofter class also disturbed the

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[88] Halvorsen and Larsen, "En liten oversikt over husmannsvesenet i Norge".
[89] Sandem, Husmannsvesent i Østfold, 11.
[90] Halvorsen and Larsen, "En liten oversikt over husmannsvesenet i Norge".

government.[91] It was not primarily the crofter's act, but rather the rapidly changing social and economical environment of the kingdom that eventually made life easier for the crofters. The new infrastructures of the railroad, shipping routes, and improved roads, the growing cities and the new industrial environment provided new opportunities for the crofter group.

From crofter to laborer

During the 1860s a grain crisis emerged. Imported grain from Russia and the U.S. was less expensive than the grain produced in Europe. Lean years and flooding also made their impact; many farmers shifted their emphasis from crop farming to husbandry. Other farmers did not fare as well and were forced to abandon their farms. *'Det store hamskiftet'*, the shift from a partially bartering, self-sustaining agriculture to a more mechanized, trade focused agriculture based on a market economy, caused increased rural unemployment, economic instability, and bankruptcies.

The rapidly escalating birthrate created a population explosion. This and the decreasing need for manpower on the farms forced a flight from the rural areas to the growing industrial urban centers and abroad, mainly America, both areas that were in need of new laborers. As the demand for farm machinery rose causing a decline of individual man-hours on the farms, the need for workers to produce the farm machinery in factories in the urban areas increased. The growing urban areas were being populated by the landless crofters and with that came new social and

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[91] Drake, Poplation and Society in Norway 1735-1865, 24.

economic challenges. Child labor became prevalent in the new industrial environment, mirroring the child labor that had been common on the farms and in the farming communities. Women and children became inexpensive sources of labor for both the tobacco industry and the match making industry.[92]

Marcus Thrane (1817-1890)

The new industrial worker class paved the way for a strong workers rights movement. Marcus Thrane (1817-1890) was a product of this. Marcus Thrane was born in Christiania (Oslo) on 14 October 1817. He was born into the upper class and his family was both affluent and influential in the city of Christiania. His father was the director of *Rigsbanken* (the national bank), but when it was discovered that he had embezzled from the bank, the whole family was ruined by the scandal. Marcus Thrane hence became an outsider of the upper class. He had taken *atrium* (the equivalent of a high school diploma) in 1840, and spent the next six months abroad. He married in 1841 and ran a private school in Lillehammer together with his wife, Josephine Buch, from 1841-46. They then had a school at *Modum Blåfargeverk* (a factory with cobalt mines used to color glass objects) in Åmot from 1847-48. This was where Thrane's sense of social awareness became lit.[93] Inspired by the revolutionary movement of 1848 and its message of equality as the call for democratic reform grew louder throughout Europe, he formed a social interest group (the Thranitter movement) and is viewed as one of the first true socialists of Norway. The Thranitter movement mainly recruited its members from

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[92]Olaug Engesæter Emblem, et al, "Historisk Bakgrunn," Realismen i Norge, 1850-1871, http://www.gmsys.net/teachers/norsk/litteratur/1850_1900/realismen1_prnt.php, 09.13.2004.

[93] "Marcus Thrane," Arbeiderpartiet,03.14,2000, www.dna.no/index.gan?id=1967&subid=0, 06.22,2005.

the crofters, smallholdings farmers, and laborers. The movement fought for universal suffrage for all men, mandatory military service for all, not only for the sons of the crofters, and a reform of the judicial system. Other important causes were the access to lower cost goods, an improvement of the school system, and the institution of crofters.[94] He also called for land reform when he demanded that the state should give special support to the poorest members of the rural areas (crofters) by granting them good quality soil at very low cost. By 1851 the Thranitter movement had somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 members.[95] Thrane started publishing the magazine *Arbeider-Foreningernes Blad* in May 1849. He was the editor and wrote most of the articles himself with the goal to educate the lower classes about their social rights. At the height of the magazine's publications there were 6000 subscribers, reaching readers in many areas of the country.[96]

The cartoon "The Farmer and Peer" on page 77 was featured in *Arbeider-Foreningens Blad* in 1851, and is a good example of how Thrane reached out to the crofters to make them realize their social rights and worth. The farmer symbolized what in Thrane's view was the oppressive upper class, and Peer symbolized the crofters and emerging worker's class who were becoming socially aware and were demanding social rights. It was also a powerful message to those who had not yet reached out for their social rights and equality. The message was clear; the crofters were not alone, but united in a growing Labor Association that would not bow down to pressure from the land owning, upper class.

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[94] Marcus Thrane og Arbeiderforeningene, Nasjonalbiblioteket. http://www.nb.no
[95] Ibid.
[96] "Marcus Thrane," Arbeiderpartiet.

The Farmer and Peer

The Farmer: Have I not told you, oh so many times, that you must discontinue your membership with the Labor Association?
Peer: Yes, but tell me why I should do that?
The Farmer: You are becoming too smart, you are born a servant! You have no need to know, nor have feelings about the events of our time!
Peer: Thank you! No, as long as I am alive I will be a member of the Labor Association: only through it will the truth see the light of day; persecution and hate only adds to its foundation and strength! – Let go of me, say I, and do not think about using force on me.[97]

Figure 13. Arbeider-Foreningernes Blad, 1851
Source: Marxist Internet Archive[98]

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97 Marcus Thrane, "Gaardbrukeren og Per," Arbeider-Foreningens Blad (1851), obtained from "Gaardbrukeren og Per" Marxist Internet Archive, 10.03.2000, www.marxists.org/norsk/reference/thrane/1851/gardbrukeren.htm, 11.03.2004. Translated by Kari Holth. The English text is a translation of the following Norwegian text:
Gaardbrukeren: Har jeg ikke sagt Dig saa mange Gange, at du skal melde Dig ud af Arbeiderforeningen?
Peer: Jo, men sig mig hvorfor jeg skal gjøre det?
Gaardbrugeren: Du bliver for klog, Du er født til Træl! Du behøver ikke at vide og kjende vor Tids Begivenheder!
Peer: Tak skal I ha! Nei, saalænge der er liv i mig vil jeg være Medlem af Arbeiderforeningen; thi ene ved den kommer Sandheden for Dagens Lys; Forfølgelse og Had bidrager end mere til at befæste og styrke den! - Slip mig nu siger jeg, tænk ikke paa at prøve Kræfter med mig.

98 http://www.marxists.org/norsk/reference/thrane/1851/gardbrukeren.htm

Thrane's success in organizing labor associations throughout Norway seriously alarmed the government. In July 1851 he was placed under arrest and, along with some two hundred of his followers who suffered a similar fate, was indicted for "crimes against the security of the state." The defendants were kept in custody during the four years that the trial dragged on. Marcus Thrane remained in prison about four more years, part of the time in solitary confinement on bread and water. During his years in prison the *Thranitter Movement* dissolved thanks to the continued persecution of the members. When Marcus Thrane was released from prison on 17 July 1858 he was unsuccessful when trying to bring his movement back to life. He then trained as a photographer, and after his wife died in 1862, he moved to the United States and became politically active among the Scandinavian settlements in the Midwest. He spent the rest of his life in the United States and died there on 30 April 1890.[99]

Figure 14. Marcus Møller Thrane (1817-90)

[99] "Marcus Thrane," Arbeiderpartiet.

Thrane wrote an article addressing the rights of land ownership in *Arbeider-Foreningernes Blad* on September 23, 1854. Below is an excerpt expressing the strong feelings of the time:

> *"Land ownership is theft! It is a curious sentence, so curious, that it is not odd that it has confused weak minds. But, this sentence has not confused us landless. It has finally brought us out of a thousand year confusion, that has ruled within us and made us subordinate, obedient servants. This sentence has us, that wandered around like docile animals, woken up and given human traits; us who were so hopeless and stared out into the dark future; us it has given a confident hope, an earthly goal like others. Let us then never forget the sentence: land ownership is theft! Let us over and over have it in out thoughts, over and over repeat it to each other internally and to our children, so that each poor soul knows and understands it, when that day arrivers, that its meaning shall be fulfilled."*
>
> *"We do certainly not wish that the right of land ownership shall be violated, we do most certainly not want to abolish the right of land ownership; on the contrary do we want, that it shall be sacred and that it shall be the veritable cornerstone of society".*
>
> *"But we will just not acknowledge the phrase about property that our opponents gave. The most of which, that they called property is viewed by us as theft; and that which they call right of land ownership is viewed by us as injustice."*[100]

Marcus Thrane was able to envision in what direction Norway's society would evolve to keep up both socially and economically with the rest of the western world.

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[100] Marcus Thrane, "Om eiendomsretten," Arbeider-Foreningernes Blad, (23 September1854), obtained from"Om eiendomsretten" Marxist Internet Archive, 10.03.2000, www.marxists.org/norsk/reference/thrane/1854/09/eiendomsretten.htm, 11.03.2004. Translated by Kari Holth.

He was also able to see that the lower class, being crofters and laborers, could continue to be victims of an unfair distribution of power and wealth. Thrane realized that the crofters had been an absolute necessity for the farmers before the modern machinery became available. He felt the same group of people, crofters turned laborers, would become a necessity for the growing industry. He was very successful in uniting crofters and laborers in the fight for equality, and even though the Norwegian government was intimidated by his views, it had no way of permanently stopping the social changes that were evolving.

During the same period when the Thranitter Movement flourished Eilert Sundt (1817-1875), an early Norwegian sociologist, conducted a series of studies of the social and economic conditions among the Norwegian lower classes.[101] He had approached the government, who had become worried about the rising dismay among the crofters and laborers spearheaded in part by Marcus Thrane, with his idea of a study of the life of the Norwegian people, especially the life of the lower classes.[102] Interestingly enough, Sundt had himself joined the Thranitter Movement with the aspirations to change it in to a purely philanthropic organization but left the movement when he was unsuccessful in doing so.[103] During the warmer parts of the year he would travel the country "speaking with both the lower and higher individuals of society and visit and live with the poor in their homes."[104] During the colder parts of the year he would write articles and books of research for both the educated and

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[101] Drake, Population and Society ion Norway, 1735-1865, 21.

[102] Bodil Stenseth, "Vitenskapsmannen Eilert Sundt – rett mann til rett tid," Forskingspolitikk, (Oslo: NIFU STEP, 2000)

[103] Nasjonalbiblioteket, "Eilert Sundt og Kristiania Arbeidersamfund", www.nb.no/html/sundt.html, 06.22.2005.

[104] Stenseth, "Vitenskapsmannen Eilert Sundt – rett mann til rett tid."

lay readers, give speeches, and participate in official debates about his findings. Sundt kept extensive records of all his research, including among other subjects, native and foreign literature. He also made a particular study of the poor laws of different countries and his study of Norwegian demographic problems must be viewed against his readings of foreign writers.[105] His most influential duty was that he was asked to give advice and suggestions to both governmental and private measures that were aimed to reduce and prevent poverty and crime.[106] He got his initial grant from the government in 1850 and traveled the country researching the livelihood and customs of crofters, laborers, and gypsies. Eilert Sundt, a self proclaimed traveling researcher, received regular grants from the government for almost twenty years until his funding was cut short in 1869.[107]

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[105] Drake, Population and Society ion Norway, 1735-1865, 22.
[106] Stenseth, "Vitenskapsmannen Eilert Sundt – rett mann til rett tid."
[107] Ibid.

Chapter 7: The political environment

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the King, Christian VII (1766-1808) and Frederik VI (1808-14), and the state functionaries had the majority of the political power in Norway. Norway was under the Danish crown, and all major political decisions concerning Norway were made in Copenhagen. Even though the political leaders of Norway were part of the Norwegian functionaries (*embedtsmenn*) only about two thousand members strong, they were dominant in the economy, education and by tradition. They had no nobility to compete with and the upper class townspeople (*borgerskapet*) did not have enough power to challenge the status quo. The farmers were politically unengaged and chose functionaries rather than farmers to rule the country.[108] The lower class had no representation at all, so the crofters were at total political mercy of the ruling class. The entire first half of the nineteenth century was characterized by politics connected to both social and economic standing, and not until later was party politics introduced, hence allowing the lower classes to gain more political power.

As a result of the Napoleonic War the union between Denmark and Norway was dissolved in 1814. Norway was forced into a new union with Sweden; a union with two independent states but with one common king, King Karl II (XIII) (1814-18). In Norway the political control remained with the senior officials, or state functionaries, who attended to administration. They controlled the majority of the

[108] Olav Engsæter, "Norsk Historie på 1800-tallet", Digitalskolen, Historisk institutt, Universitetet i Bergen, http://web.hist.uib.no/digitalskolen/gammel_husmann/forberedelse.htm, 09.14.2004.

posts in the ministry and the majority of the seats in the *Storting* (the Norwegian legislative body), both sections that commonly met in session every three years. During the 1830s changes in the political makeup were seen. The farmers gained political interest, began their campaign of opposition to the state functionaries, and had as their goal to lessen the functionaries' political power.

The introduction of parliamentarism

The middle of the nineteenth century was marked by constant changes, as we have seen in chapters 4, 5, and 6. The political arena was no different. Although I have not found evidence of any crofters initiating any of the reforms, many of the changes were initiated and shaped by individuals like Marcus Thrane and Eilert Sundt (both with different agendas) who realized the need for reform that would benefit the lower class of crofters and laborers.

Towards the middle of the century antagonism gradually arose between the representatives of the senior officials and the delegates for the farmers and the radicals. The latter came in opposition with the *Storting* and demanded a *Storting* that was backed by a popular vote. Two issues became the backbone of this campaign: the requirement of a yearly *Storting* (passed in 1869) and mandatory attendance for the members of the ministry and the delegates to the *Storting* (passed in 1884).[109] After three vetoes by King Oscar II (1872-1905) the parliamentary system was introduced to Norway in 1884. This meant that the ministry needed a majority support from the *Storting*, representing more of the

[109] Olaug Engesæter Emblem, Libæk, Stenersen og Syvertsen, "Ord i tid 2" - Studiebok (Det norske samlaget) Digitalskolen, Historisk institutt © Universitetet i Bergen. Obtained from the web site www.gmsys.net/teachers/norsk/litteratur/1850_1900/realismen1_prnt.php, 09.15.2004.

population and not only the support of the King. Toward the end of the nineteenth century there was a rising feeling of nationalism, and the Norwegians demanded an independent Norway. After several negotiations and tense moments the Union between Norway and Sweden was dissolved in 1905, 100 years ago.

From class politics to party politics

As the farmers and intellectuals gained interest in politics, new alliances were formed on the political stage. Farmers with large farms, mainly from the eastern parts of Norway, had by 1850 gradually partnered themselves with the upper class and the state functionaries in support of the traditional existing political system. The farmers from small and medium sized farms united themselves with the new middle class of teachers, lawyers, and local functionaries to oppose the traditional administration. This group was also sympathetic to the crofters and laborers and rapidly gained political support throughout Norway, both in the rural and urban areas.

Søren Jaabæk from Mandal, Vest-Agder founded the first *Bondevennforening* (Farmer's Friend Society) in 1865. Søren Jaabæk was a long time member of the Storting (1845-91) and was a former farmer and teacher. *Bondevennene* were in opposition to the Norwegian upper ruling class and were the first successful, organized voter's group in Norway.[110] Their goal was to improve the relationship between the ruling class and the farmers and to give the local communities more power.

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[110]Statsarkivet, "Søren Jaabæk (1814-1894)," Statsarkivet i Kristiansand, (5 April, 2003),www.statsarkivet.no/kristiansand, 02.25.2005.

The first attempt to create a party organization in 1859 failed. Ten years later the first liberal block was formed, though without a party organization. Norway's first political party, the radical Liberal Party, was established in 1884 and its political counterpart, the Conservative party, a few months later.[111] The Labor party was founded in 1887.

Figure 17. Søren Jaabæk (1814-94)

Landmandsforbundet, the Farmers Federation, was founded in 1896, and by 1914 it was 50,000 members strong (mainly farmers), constituting a formidable pressure group on social and cultural issues. The federation's ideology was extremely nationalistic and had the following economic demands: cheap transport, inexpensive credit, and tariff benefits. A parallel body, *Småbrukarlaget*, the Smallholders Association, dating from 1913, marked a still more significant trend. The Smallholders Association owed its existence to the fact that the crofter class was being replaced by a new category of owners. Johan Castberg (1862-1926), a democrat, tried to win their support and was one of the key players in establishing

[111] Tor Dagre, "The History of Norway."

the *Arbeiderbruk- og Boligbanken* in 1903. The *Arbeiderbruk- og Boligbanken* was a financial institution created to help the middle and lower classes to finance the purchase of workers' holdings and homesteads. Castberg's goal was to unite the underclass to create a radical political alternative, which bordered both the Left and the Right. He backed away from socialism and aimed more toward smoothing out the differences and working against class struggle through a social reform policy. He became an important politician representing the Left Party that was loosing its hold both in the towns and among the rural population. The Left Party was challenged by the new *Bondepartiet*, the Agrarian Party, established in 1921, which cared more about farm profits than rural culture and championed especially the interests of the larger farmers, whose organization, *Landmandsforbundet*, had begun to win seats in the Storting in 1918. Attempts to establish a coalition always failed, as the Left Party feared it would loose its identity, which still was grounded in mainly cultural and national attitudes.[112]

Landmandsforbundet was as early as the 1890s in favor of ending the institution of crofters. During a local chapter's annual meeting in 1900, a unanimous vote favored the abolishment of the institution.[113] During the federation's annual meeting in 1909, the vote once again favored getting rid of the institution of crofters. It was suggested that the farmer was to give a type of diploma or report to his crofters and hired hands at the end of their service.[114]

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[112] Ibid., 299-300.

[113] Pål Gihle, Østre Toten Bondelag gjennom 100 År 1882-1982 (Gjøvik: Oppland-Trykk, 1982), 15.

[114] Olav Rovde, I Kamp for Jamnstelling 1896-1945, Vol. 1, Norges Bondelag 1896-1996 (Oslo: Landbruksforlaget, 1995), 118.

During the fifteen years spanning 1920-35, Norway experienced twelve changes of government. Two were caused by the death of a premier in office, but each of the other ten by some modification of party attitudes in the *Storting* toward a minority ministry. Norway got its first Labor ministry in January of 1928. However, it was very short lived as it collapsed after only eighteen days. When the Left Party returned to office, two important acts were passed. A state Grain Monopoly was established and the Land Act of June 22 1928 was passed. The latter provided funds and powers of expropriation for the establishment of new smallholdings and the enlargement of existing ones in order to make them more viable production units.

Chapter 8: Land reform

Land Act of 22 June 1928

Since the structure of Norwegian agriculture had dramatically changed and the demand for social equality and improved living conditions for the small farmers and remaining crofters had grown stronger, the Storting, controlled by the Left Party, passed the first Land Act on June 22, 1928. The intention of this new act was to allow all those who had their profession in agriculture to own their own land. This would give them a greater incentive and better opportunities to use the natural resources their farm had to offer. The goal was to create as many agricultural jobs and work units as possible.

The Land Act of 1928 first and foremost called for an agricultural committee to be established in each municipality. Section 1 states

> There is to be established an Agricultural Committee in each municipality. The committee shall consist of 5 members and 5 deputy substitutes. In view of an application from the municipality board, the Ministry [of Agriculture] can in special circumstances establish additional agricultural committees in a municipality.[115]

There were some requirements for those who wished to be considered for election to the committee. The law asked that the members should be

[115] Jordloven av 22 juni 1928, Kapittel I, §1:
I hvert herred skal det være et jordstyre. Jordstyret skal være på 5 medlemmer med varamenn. Efter søknad fra herredstyret kan vedkommende departement i særelige tilfelle bestemme at det kan oprettes flere jordstyrer i herredet.

knowledgeable in agriculture and that at least one member have knowledge of building construction. If the Ministry of Agriculture did not make any other specific requirements for a municipality, it was also preferred that one of the members be knowledgeable about forestry. The members were elected for a three-year term by the municipality board. This committee created the framework for all agricultural decisions in each municipality, and became the institution to which all problems, issues, and questions were brought.

Chapter V of the Land Act was the most important part for the crofters. Its purpose was to end officially the institution of crofters and give each individual crofter the incentive, right, and opportunity to purchase his crofter's holding. Section 36 established the ground rules for the improvement of the crofters' situation and protection of their rights. It stated that the crofter had the right to petition to the agricultural committee concerning items in his contract with the farmer. The committee had the authorization to change the lease agreements to make them more favorable for the lessee. However, the contract had to be at least ten years old and could not be changed for yet another ten years if changes were made now. Section 39 was at least as important and groundbreaking as section 36. It stated:

> Main rule for the right of preemption
>
> When leased land, which is discussed in this chapter, is conveyed through inheritance, sale, allodial rights or foreclosure to a new owner alone or in connection with another property, title or chattels, the lessee has pre-emption of the farm. However, it is required that the lessee himself or co-regent

spouse and their parents and grandparents have used the farm for at least 10 years.[116]

There were 6079 crofters reported in 1928. The ones who had cultivated their crofter's holding for a minimum of ten years, sometimes for generations, were able to take advantage of this new law to gain ownership of the property. A son of a crofter tells the story of his father: "When the new Land Act of 1928 became active my father decided to apply for the right to expropriate Steinmyra [the crofter holding where he lived]. The application was given to the municipal board that recommended the expropriation. But the crofter himself, not the municipality, should have been the official applicant. Therefore it took an unreasonable long time to process the case – over three years. My father died on 1931 and hence never experienced being the owner of Steinmyra. I then became the official applicant, and after the appraisal, I became the owner of Steinmyra. The price was set too 1700.00 [Nkr]... With a guarantee from the municipality I got a loan from the *Småbruk- and Bustadbanken*, totaling 2400.00 [Nkr] to buy the farm and to build a new barn on the property."[117]

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[116] Jordloven av 22 juni 1928, Kapittel V, § 36:

Om omordning av leieforholdet. Er der som vilkår for jordleien truffet avtale om arbeidsplikte, kan leieren kreve ydelsen omgjort i en pengeavgift ved skjønn av jordstyret. Når leieren for øverig finner leievilkårene utilfredstillende, kan han søke jordstyret om omordning av leieforholdet, når minst 10 år er gått fra kontraktens opprettelse. Jordstyret kan da, hvor det finner det rimelig, omordne leieforholdet på den måte det finner det hensiktsmessig og kan herunder i tilfelle fastsette leien til et efter forholdene i bygdens passende beløp. Har jordstyret ikke funnet grunn til å omordne forholdet, eller har leieren ikke innen frist av 3 månder efter endelig avgjørelse av omordningen erklært overfor jordstyret, at han vil benytte sig av omordningen, kan ny søknad først fremsettes efter 10 års forløp. Jordstyrets omgjørelse av arbeidsplikten i an pengeavgift, samt dets omordning av leieforholdet for øverig, trer I tilfelle leieren benytter sig derav, i kraft fra først faredag som leien lovlig kan opsies til. Før jordstyret treffer bestemmelse om omordning efter denne paragraf, skal det forsøke å få saken ordnet mindelig ved megling mellem partene.

[117] Semmingsen, Husmannsminner, 108.

Another man tells about how he remained a crofter until 1952, at which time he decided to buy his crofter holding. "I was a crofter the entire time until I bought the crofter holding where I had lived for 41 years. I bought the place in the spring of 1952 after several negotiations. We did not agree on the price, so I had to approach the Agricultural Committee for their assistance. When the Agricultural Committee became involved, we finally settled. The price he [the farmer] demanded was Nkr 7000.00 and I had offered Nkr. 5500.00. The municipality then guaranteed a loan in *Bustadsbanken*, totaling Nkr. 4900.00. I paid Nkr. 600.00 in cash. The place is located in a somewhat isolated area, without a road, and some 600 meters above sea level. When I bought it did not have electricity."[118]

The majority of the crofter holdings that became private properties were sold through mutual agreements between the farmer and the crofter. As was indicated by the two previous accounts, the seller set the price of the crofter holding, but when disagreements over the purchase price occurred, the Agricultural Committee had the power to make the final, binding decision. Most of the crofter holdings were sold at the lowest market value.[119]

In the beginning there was not much change in the social status and the economic condition of the former crofters, even though most of them now had become owners of their own land. However, it did give the crofters an increased feeling of self-worth, and it gave them pleasure to be the masters of their own land. But they also faced a new reality – bank loans with set interest rates and installment

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[118] Ibid, 188.
[119] Hovdehaugen, Husmannstida, 133.

payments. The bank was less personal and sometimes more demanding than the farmer had been. Those who bought their crofter holding around 1920, just before the depression took hold, got first hand experience with this. Those who did manage to hold on to their new farms soon realized that their fields and other resources could not produce enough food to sustain their family. Once again they was forced to seek additional employment elsewhere. As before, the income largely came from working for a farmer with a large farm, the logging industry, or fisheries. Hence, for a few, the social difference between the former crofters and the farmers might have continued, especially in the areas where the differences had been large. These differences practically vanished after the end of the Second World War, however the trauma all layers of Norwegian society suffered during the five-year occupation by the German forces had a uniting effect on all Norwegians. But the main reason was probably that there were essentially no crofters left in Norway after 1945.

The structure of land reform

In its simplest meaning land reform has meant the breaking up of large holdings and redistribution of the land to the peasants, cultivators, or landless workers. Land reform can be traced back as far as the sixth century B.C. in Greece, and its classic pattern was seen in the revolution of Mexico after 1910, in Egypt in 1952 and Bolivia in 1953.[120]

Elias H. Tuma goes a little further when giving the definition to the term *land reform* in his book Twenty-six Centuries of Agrarian Reform: A Comparative

[120] Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, 1968. S.v.. "Land Reform", by Philip M Raup.

Analysis. He offers two general definitions: 1)...land reform... is invariable a more or less direct, publicly controlled change in the existing ways of land ownership (i.e. changing the agrarian status quo), or 2)... it invariable involves a 'diffusion' or spreading of wealth, income or productive capacity.[121] He also stresses that some reformers advocate modifications of the tenure system without changing the form of the tenure. "Ghonemy,[122] for example, enumerates seven such definitions and adds one of his own: change for the better, change in rental terms or resource ownership, greater equality and resource allocation, economic development, change in agricultural institutions, change in economic organization, redistribution of land in order to promote political stability and Ghonemy's own definition which emphasizes decision making and ownership."[123]

According to the United Nations, agrarian reform means any improvement in the agrarian structure or

"...the institutional framework of agricultural production. It includes, in the first place, the legal customary system under which the land is owned; the distribution of ownership of farm property between large estates and peasant farms or among peasant farms of various sizes; land tenancy, the system under which land is operated and its product divided between operator and owner; the organization of credit, production and marketing; the mechanism through which agriculture is

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[121] Elias H. Tuma, Twenty-Six Centuries of Agrarian Reform: A Comparative Analysis (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), 8.

[122] Mohamad Riad El Ghonemy is a Senior Research Associate at the International Development Centre, University of Oxford, United Kingdom and also Emeritus Professor, Ein-Shams University, Cairo, and Fellow, Department of Economics, The American University in Cairo, Cairo. He is an economist specializing in rural poverty.

[123] Tuma, Twenty-Six Centuries of Agrarian Reform: A Comparative Analysis , 8.

financed; the burdens it imposed on rural populations by governments to rural populations, such as technical advice and education facilities, health service, water supply and communication."[124]

In chapter V of the Land Act of 1928 we see examples of Ghonemy's seven definitions of land reform; change for the better, change in 'rental terms' or 'resource ownership,' greater equality and resource allocation, et cetera, as well as the United Nations' definition of the term. This land act was Norway's first legislative land reform that was attempting to cover all the agricultural areas of Norway and all the agricultural workers. It was not a perfect act, but it did set the wheels in action for later legislation with the continued aim of best utilizing all of Norway's tillable land in the best interest of all Norwegian citizens.

[124] Ibid., 11-2

Chapter 9: Postscript

Many of the agricultural experts and farmers themselves saw early on that the Land Act of 1928 had its flaws. It was a general consensus that the Land Act was inflexible and unable to face new trends in agriculture. They realized that the new machines and technology required more than just creating a good system, based on how the law as written. Soon the new era had outgrown the law. Having a lot of small production units proved to be inefficient and nationally more costly than having larger units that could utilize their resources more efficiently.

The *Storting* tried to keep up with the rapidly changing times. In 1930 the Norwegian government passed the Marketing Act to 'rationalize' the farm market, and this became the basis for further legislation and agreements. Among the goals of the Marketing Act was to control the prices in order to equalize income among farmers and farmers' income with respect to other occupations, especially skilled labor in manufacturing. The Marketing Act was designed to promote the marketing of farm products by sales promotion, export, and provisions of information.[125]

After the Second World War the area per worker in agriculture rose about seventy percent. An increasing number of farmers had to turn to other industries for employment, as their small farms could not economically support their families. Increasingly more farmers leased their neighbors' fields to get better use out of the machinery they owned. The trend was toward larger units that could utilize resources in a more productive way. As the farm machinery became bigger, the

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[125] Andrew Larkin, "Institutional Adjustment in Norway's Rural Economy: An Instrumental Evaluation." Journal of Economic Issues 21 (June 1987): 629-37.

question was no longer if the machinery was big enough for the farms, but if the farms were big enough for the machinery. The size of their farms and the lack of capital was what prevented many farmers from moving forward. These were key issues that had to be dealt with in the new Land Act.

Land Act of 18 March 1955

A new Land Act, which replaced the Land Act of 1928, was passed on 18 March 1955. Section 1 declares:

> The purpose of this law is to make the circumstances favorable so that the country's arable land with adjoining forest, mountains and all, which is connected, can be utilized in such a way that is most productive for society and for those who have their career in agriculture.
>
> To promote this cause the State can help with the obtaining of tillable land, grazing areas, forest and other land and rights
>
> a) For the establishment of new farms which are large enough to give the owner and his dependants a dependable economic condition,
>
> b) To expand old, existing farms so that they reach this goal in one or more steps.
>
> Where work is needed or other needs make it desirable, the State however can give aid to the establishment of smaller farms of expand small farms.[126]

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[126] Jordlova av 18 mars 1955

Denne lov har ril føremål å leggje thihøva slik til rette at jordviddene i landet med skog of fjell og alt som hører til, kan bli nytta på den måten som er mest gagnleg for samfunnet og dei som har yrket i landbruket.

For å fremje dette føremålet kan staten hjelpe til med å skaffe jord, beitemark, skog og annan grunn og rettar

The Land Act of 1955 aimed at promoting an expedient use of land with regard to the interest of society as a whole and all who work in the field of agriculture. The Act affirmed that the State can assist in obtaining land for building new farms and for developing older holdings large enough to ensure the owner and his family safe economic conditions. If this could not be arranged by voluntary purchase, the State could use its right of preemption or expropriate land with the rights pertaining to it. The Land Act affirmed that, if the County Agricultural Board found the land kept in improper condition or laying fallow, it could instruct the owner on the steps necessary to ensure that the land, depending on the circumstances, produced a reasonable yield. A time limit was to be set for carrying out the instructions. The owner could also be ordered to lease the land for a period of up to ten years, but usually not more than five. The State could also, when it saw it necessary, expropriate property. The Act stated that tilled and arable land not be used for anything other than agricultural production. Dispensation could be given if an overall assessment indicates that the agricultural interest should yield. To prevent the splitting up of holdings, partitioning was prohibited unless the County Agricultural and Forestry Board granted approval. Such approval could be given only if this was economically feasible by the common interest of society.

This new Land Act did not invalidate the rights the crofters had gained through the Land Act of 1928. However, since there were practically no crofters left

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til reisning av nye bruk som er store nok til å gje eigaren og huslyden hans trygge økonomiske kår,

til utvidning av eldere bruk så dei kan nå dette i eitt eller flere steg.

Der arbeidstilhøva eller andre tilhøve gjer det ynskjeleg, kan staten likevel hjelpe til med å reise mindre bruk og utvide mindre bruk.

in 1955, the issue of crofter's rights was not a major concern to the *Storting*. An end to an era had come. The crofter class that had been so plentiful 100 years earlier had vanished.

Appendix

I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank all the members of the *Tirsdagskubben*, past and present, for all the wonderful work they have done collecting such a tremendous amount of the written and oral history of Trøgstad. Not only have they given their community an immense quantity of colorful and personal historical background, but have allowed the likes of me to learn about people and places of the past in a 'folksy' environment. To me, who has an undergraduate degree in anthropology, this type of emotional history is very valuable and allows me to better feel the pulse of a society long gone.

Tirsdagsklubben also collected, recorded, and preserved many crofter contracts from their area. Their material is located at the local library but is not officially published. They were written in Norwegian and are translated by me, Kari Holth. They are common of both their era and the area, and two are offered here in the appendix.

Crofter contracts

This first crofter contract was from Vestre Tveiten farm, for the crofter's holding Schønhaug in Trøgstad, 1845:

Signer Christian Nøchelby of the farm Vestre Tveiten in Trøgstad Parish hereby admits to have left Christian Brynelsen Schønhaug a small lot in the southwestern edge of my deeded farm's outfield. Next summer he [Christian Brynelsen Schønhaug] shall fence in his assigned lot, and then on the same lot he is

allowed to build a cottage, barn and cow stable, as well as clearing the land and use it for fields and pasture to the best of his ability. This mentioned Christian Brynelsen shall use and live on the assigned lot in Vestre Tveiten's outfield during his and his present wife's lifespan as long as the following criteria are followed:

1. Christian Brynelsen shall from the end of the year 1845 give a yearly rent of 3 Spd, where as three Spesidaler shall be paid to the owner of Vestre Tveten within the end of each December.[127]
2. Christian Brynelsen is obligated to after notification by Vestre Tveten's owner to work 14 days during the plowing and harvest seasons for 8 Sk per day, as well as cutting 14 daa of crops during the harvest for 12 Sk per oat daa and 16 Sk per barley daa.[128]
3. In Vestre Tveten's outfield, Christian Brynelsen is granted yearly pasture space for one cow and one calf.
4. The manure on the earlier mentioned lot shall by no means be removed from the parcel; rather it shall be used every year for the improvement of the lot.
5. Christian Brynelsen shall not without permission cut down live trees, neither in Vestre Tveten's home fields nor outfields, but he himself shall obtain the needed firewood, hence during the summer he is allowed to collect dry tree stumps and broken off branches for such use, when it is not damaging to the owner of Tveten.

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[127] Spd. is short for *Spesidaler*, the currency used in Norway until 1875 when the krone and øre system was introduced. 1 *spesidaler* consisted of 120 *skilling* (Sk.). According to this contract the crofter had to work forty-five days @ 8 *skilling* to pay his yearly rent fee of 3 *spesidaler*.

[128] 1 daa., or dekare, equals 1000 square meters, or one quarter acre.

6. All fences that surround Christian Brynelsen's lot or parcel are to be maintained by him who is also responsible for the materials.
7. The buildings which Christian Brynelsen builds on his mentioned lot in Vestre Tveten's outfield shall by his and his wife's descendants after his and his wife's death not be sold, torn down or removed from the parcel, but it remains the right of Vestre Tveten's owner to buy them for the appraised value given by a third party.
8. If Christian Brynelsen or [his] wife do not punctually fulfill the obligations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 in this agreement, but rather do wrong, then they have breached their right to use and dwell on the mentioned lot, and are obligated to, without a court hearing and sentencing, after being expelled, right after Christmas to move and clan and tidy up the mentioned lot the next following travel day.

Tveten April 1845 C. Nøchleby

All the obligations in the agreement are accepted C. Brynelsen (m.i.P)[129]

Witnesses Hans Gopperud N. Guldbransen Skofsrud

The second crofter contract is from Fallet in Høland, which was part of the parsonage farm in Høland parish. Høland is a neighbor community of Trøgstad. On 14 January 1847 parson Gabriel S. Faye signed this contract with Christian Andersen, and as you will see this contract is both demanding and harsh.

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[129] M.i.P. means '*med iholden Pen*'. When a person who did not know how to write had to sign his or her name, another person would sign for him or her while he or she was also holding the pen. The phrase can be loosely translated as 'with co-held pen'.

As Søren Johannesen has relinquished his [crofter's] holding, which is tied to the parsonage farm of Høland in exchange for keeping a supply of foodstuff, U hereby, as the user of the parsonage farm of Høland, for the duration of being the parson of Høland, grant the usage of the registered holding Fallet to my present farm-servant Christian Andersen on the following terms:

1 He [Christian Andersen] will yearly supply the following foodstuff to Søren Johannesen Fallet and wife for as long as they live: 5 Tdr. of oats, 1/4 Tdr. of rye, 3/4 Tdr. of barley, 6 Tdr. of potatoes and the [Søren Johannesen Fallet] right to plant 1/4 Tdr. potatoes, 1/4 Tdr. of herring, 2 Bpd. Meat, 2 Potter of liquor for Christmas, 2 Spd. in allowance, 10 Allen of burlap, and fodder for one cow and one sheep that remains living on the holding. [130]

2 He runs the holding and will not let any of its parts be run by another. Nor must he remove hay or straw, but rather keep all the fodder on the holding.

3 He keeps the houses on the holding, which belong to the parsonage farm, as well as the fences, in impeccable condition.

4 He is responsible to pay me a yearly fee, as long as the foodstuff receiving couple is alive 5 (five) Spesidaler, and after their death 7 (seven) Spesidaler, which are added to each new year as long as he has not

[130] The following are old Norwegian measurements: Td., Tdr. (pl) is tønde or barrel, in this case for dry goods, which is equivelent to 139 liters. One fluid tønde is 115.8 liters. Bpd. is bismerpund, a weight measurement that equals 5.98 kilograms. Pot, Potter (pl) is a fluid measurement that equals 0.96 liters. An Alen is a measurement of length and equals 62.7 centimeters.

earned them through work. In addition, he will report to the parsonage farm when being called for, for any kind of work, in return of receiving from 14th of April through 14th of October 8 Skilling, and 14th of October through 14 April, 6 Skilling, per day, including board. Should he be inhibited from showing up in person, he must obtain [a] responsible worker in his place.

5 He plows [the fields] in autumn with [his] own horse and equipment, 6 days on the parsonage farm without pay, and he is required to let me keep [the] horse for use for the now common pay, when requested.

6 He is allowed to have in the pasture as many cattle as he can feed during the winter at the holding, but he is not allowed to let other people's animals use the pasture.

7 He is allowed to take the necessary fencing material and firewood in the forest, where shown.

8 He must not take in boarders without my permission, and must in general keep to the laws that apply to all crofters.

9 Should he break or refuse to fulfill any of the above terms, he will loose his user right and is obligated to after legal termination, clear and leave the holding the next legal travel day.

Høland parsonage farm, 14 January 1847

Gabriel S. Faye, Parson of Høland

I hereby bind myself to all the above obligations.

Datum utspura. Christian Andersen

Witnesses Abraham Anders Løkkeberg (m.i.P.) Svend Paulsen Calstad (m.i.P.)

Christian Vethe told this story of what happened regarding this very strict contract for Fallet, a 40 dekares crofter's holding:

"When Karen, the wife of Christian Andersen, and also my grandmother, saw this contract, she realized right away there was no way they could honor its demands. Karen was a devout believer in God, and with her Bible in her purse she walked through the forest to the parsonage farm to pay the parson a visit. It is told that she talked in such a way that the parson cried. The parson annulled the contract, and since then the crofter was responsible for supplying the parsonage farm with ten cords firewood each year. It was to be cut and delivered at the parsonage farm in Høland. This arrangement lasted for the duration that Fallet was a crofter's holding."[131]

[131] Both the contact and the following comments were acquired from Tirsdagsklubben.

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