

# An 1886 Autograph Solves a Norwegian Mystery

Steven Nelson Jonnes

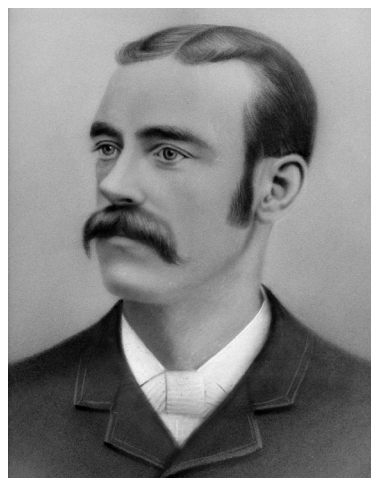
## A Husmann Family in Eidsvoll Parish

Bernt Olsen Bonn (1856-1937) emigrated from Eidsvoll, Akershus, Norway in 1875, eventually settling in Montevideo, Chippewa, Minnesota. In Norway, he was known as Bernt Olsen Bønsmoen, the son of Ole Larsen Bønsmoen (1820-1902) and Dorthea Olsdatter Dalum (1819-1893). Ole was a *husmann med jord*<sup>1</sup> whose small crofter plot was one parcel of the larger *Bøn Farm*.<sup>2</sup>

Ole and Dorthea had six children who lived to adulthood: Laura, Bernt, Christian, Maren, Ole, and Olava. Between 1875 and 1886, four of the children, as well as the parents, immigrated separately to Minnesota.<sup>3</sup> According to family lore, the two remaining children, daughters Maren and Olava, married in Norway and never emigrated.<sup>4</sup> The mystery is what happened to them.

Research revealed Maren was born at *Bønsmoen* crofter farm on 16 July 1860 and confirmed at Eidsvoll Church on 7 November 1875.<sup>5</sup> She was enumerated with her family in the 1865 census and as a visitor at her uncle's residence at the nearby *Dalum* farm in the 1875 census.<sup>6</sup> At 23, she married Johan Larsen in Eidsvoll.<sup>7</sup> Her husband reportedly worked for the railroad.<sup>8</sup>

Olava (or Olivia) is even more mysterious. Her birth and confirmation dates are unknown as is the name of her



Charcoal drawing of Bernt O. Bonn from a photograph taken about 1892

husband. However, she had a daughter named Dagmar whom her brother Christian Bonn (1858-1942) visited in the city of Moss on voyages back to Norway in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>9</sup> Olava may also have had a son named Christian who came to America at some point.<sup>10</sup>

Attempts to learn more about Maren and Olava have been unsuccessful.

Interest in unraveling their life stories is motivated by a desire to find present-day descendants, who in turn could conceivably aid in the larger effort to advance the Bonn ancestry.<sup>11</sup> Such descendants would most likely be third cousins or third cousins once removed to the author. Research in Eidsvoll is complicated by the loss of many parish records in an 1877 fire at the Eidsvoll parsonage.

## An Antique Autograph Album

Among the personal effects of the author's mother was a deteriorating autograph book from the 1880s that had

1 *Husmann* is translated as cotter or crofter – a man who rented a small house from a farm owner in exchange for his labor. A *husmann med jord* was a crofter allowed to grow his own crops in addition to helping the farm owner.

2 In Norway's current property registration system (*matrikelen*), *Bøn* is farm number (*gårdsnummer*) 138 in Eidsvoll Municipality. *Bønsmoen* is parcel number (*bruksnummer*) 8 within farm 138.

3 Bernt left in 1875, Christian 1880, Ole 1882, the parents 1883, and Laura in 1886.

4 Susan K. Quella & Beverly Bonn Jonnes, "Aaberge Family Tree, 1713-2001: For the Descendants of Peter/Petter Peterson Aaberge (Attachment 3)," unpublished manuscript, 2001; loose-leaf copy privately held by Steven Nelson Jonnes, Ashburn, Virginia, 2021.)

5 Eidsvoll Parish (Akershus, Norway), *Klokkerbok* nr. I 3, 1871-1877, *Konfirmerte* [Confirmations], p. 138, entry 70, Maren Gorine, 7 November 1875; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/497/80](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/497/80) : 11 November 2020).

6 1865 Norway census, Akershus County, Eidsvoll Parish, Fuglerud skoledistrikt

8b, residence 104, Bøhn Backs farm (lfn. 361b/352a), p. 248, Maren Olsd in household of Ole Larsen; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/38024/223](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/38024/223) : 11 November 2020). 1875 Norway census, Akershus County, Eidsvoll Parish, Tellingskrets 10, residence 30, Aalborg (Dalum) farm (lfn. 241c), p. 1518, line 7, Maren Olsdtr. in household of Hans Olsen; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/52303/299](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/52303/299) : 11 November 2020).

7 Eidsvoll Parish (Akershus, Norway), *Ministerialbok* nr. 6, 1882-1895, *Viede* [Marriages], p. 5, entry 7, Johan Larsen and Maren Olsd, 18 April 1883; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/3468/9](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/3468/9) : 23 October 2020).

8 Quella and Jonnes, "Aaberge Family Tree," 2001.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*

11 According to his 1902 Minnesota death card, Ole Larsen Bonn's father and mother were Lars Larsen and Marie Mork. Their Norwegian identities remain elusive.

# An 1886 Autograph Solves a Norwegian Mystery

belonged to her grandfather. Although less popular today, autograph books have long been a way for people to memorialize their feelings about friends and acquaintances, especially when parting.

Bernt Bonn's album is 4 x 7 inches and covered in dark green velvet. There are 41 entries in the book, the vast majority of which were authored by friends in Montevideo, Minnesota. Thirty are in English and eleven in Norwegian. It was the Norwegian-language entries that led to the breakthrough. With translation help, I learned that Bernt returned to Norway in 1886, eleven years after his emigration, and he apparently stayed about a year.<sup>12</sup>

The autograph album includes seven Norwegian-language entries signed outside the United States: five in Norway, one in Liverpool, and one on the Atlantic Ocean.

1886 – 2 entries

Joh. Larsen, 11 July Ski, Norway, railway station  
Fredrikke, 27 September, Ski, Norway

1887 – 5 entries

Jens Larsen, Anne Firs, and L. Lundgaard, all 17 May, Eidsvoll, Norway  
Maren Andvord, 25 May Liverpool, England  
Charlotte Schjermann, 3 June, on the Atlantic Ocean

The first entry written in Norway is dated 11 July 1886. This is only 17 days after Bernt's sister Laura Olsdatter Bønsmoen (1853-1923), departed Christiania (now Oslo). She was the last member of the family to emigrate.<sup>13</sup> Her destination was Stephen in Marshall County, Minnesota, where her parents and two brothers were living. It would appear Bernt travelled back to Norway at least partly to aid

his sister in effecting her departure. He left America sometime in late April, according to farewell messages in his album in Montevideo, so he would have been in Norway throughout the month of June.

Bernt returned to Eidsvoll the following spring. On 17 May 1887 he met with three old acquaintances or relatives who signed his album. These were farewell greetings because he left Christiania on the SS *Marsdin* on 20 May 1887, headed back to Montevideo, Minnesota.<sup>14</sup> The ship carried Bernt across the North Sea to Hull, England, where he traveled by rail across England to Liverpool. From there, he took passage on the SS *Polynesian*, and arrived in Quebec, Canada, on 5 June 1887.<sup>15</sup>

Maren Andvord, age 21, and Charlotte Schjermann, age 33, were both aboard the SS *Marsdin* with Bernt from Christiania to Hull.<sup>16</sup> Maren's destination was Viroqua, Wisconsin; she was likely a stranger he befriended on the voyage. Charlotte may also have been a stranger, but coincidentally or not, she too was headed to Montevideo, Minnesota.

## The brother-in-law Connection

The 11 July 1886 autograph entry, though, is revealing for another reason. It was addressed to "Dear Brother-in-law" and signed by Joh. Larsen! This is Maren's husband Johan Larsen.

A translation of Johan's autograph message follows:

Dear Brother in law, I will write my name in your family tree and become faithful friends until death. I cannot describe what a pleasure it is for me to get in touch with you. I remember years and days ago we stood before the altar of God and drank of the blood of God, and he asked us to forsake our sins. Dear brother-in-law and brother, stay here in Norway to earn your bread. Otherwise if you are traveling to America

12 Translation assistance provided by the author's Norwegian cousin Kari Eriksen (Råholt, Norway), and *FamilySearch* Community members Charlotte Noelle Champenois and Carol McIntyre.

13 "Oslo politidistrikt, Emigrant Protocols, nr. 12: 1885-1887," Oslo Police District, *Emigrantprotokoll* nr. 12, p. 242, line 14 (unnumbered), Laura O. Bøhn, 23 June 1886; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/43620/243](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/43620/243) : 5 February 2021).

14 "Oslo politidistrikt, Emigrant Protocols, nr. 14: 1887-1888," Oslo Police District, *Emigrantprotokoll* nr. 14, p. 62, line 6 (unnumbered), Bernt O. Bon, 19 May 1887; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/43622/65](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/43622/65) : 5 February 2021).

15 "Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935," 5 June 1887, SS *Polynesian*, unpaginated, line 2770, Bernt Bon; digital image, *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://ancestry.com) : 6 November 2020); citing Library and Archives Canada microfilm series RG-76C.

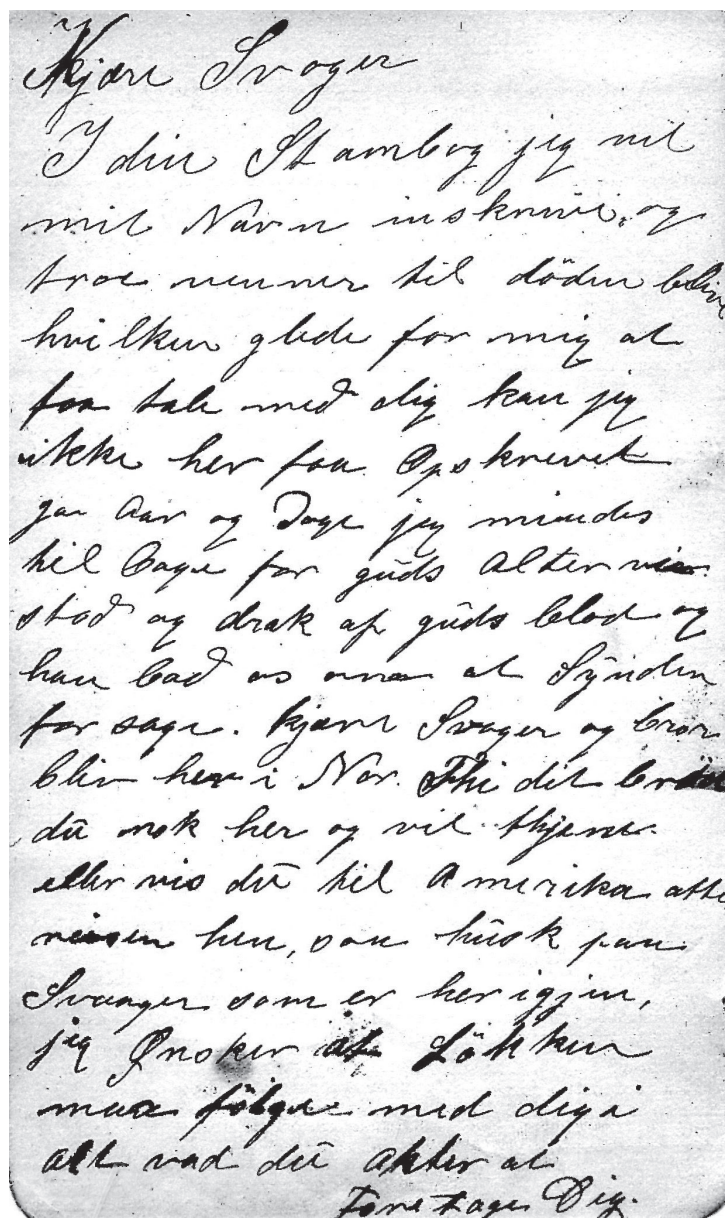
16 "Emigrant Protocols, nr. 14: 1887-1888," Oslo Pol. Dist., p. 66, lines 18 and 33 (unnumbered).

again, remember your brother-in-law who is left here. I want happiness to accompany you in everything you intend to do.

Ski railway station 11 July, Norway 1886

Dedicated to Mr Bøhn

From your Joh. Larsen



Kjære Svoger  
I din Hamborg jeg vil  
mit Navn inskriver, og  
troer nu mer til døden belønning  
hvilkens glæde for mig at  
for tale med dig kan jeg  
ikke her for opskrevet  
for din og Dage jeg mindes  
til Dage for guds Altet min  
stod og drak af guds blod og  
han bad os om at Lyndes  
for sage. Kjære Svoger og bror  
blir her i Nor. Thi det bror  
da nok her og vil hjælpe  
eller vis du til Amerika alle  
mænd her, som hvide paa  
Svanger som er her igjen,  
jeg troer at Løst kan  
mua følges med dig i  
alt vad du Akter at  
Tore Tage Dig

In addition to being Bernt's brother-in-law, Johan may have been a childhood friend. Johan was only a year older than Bernt and they were confirmed at Eidsvoll Church on the same day in 1870.<sup>17</sup> That might explain the reference to receiving communion together.

The crucial information here is the location. Johan wrote his message at Ski Railway Station, which is over 50 miles south of the village of Bøn. By zeroing in on Ski Parish in the Kråkstad clerical district, the author was able to verify Maren and Johan were indeed residents. The 1891 census enumerated them living close to the train station in the center of town at a property called *Sander Mellem*.<sup>18</sup> Johan was working as a steam engine stoker, or fireman (*fyrbøter*), and he and Maren were supporting a 10-year-old girl named Sofie Samuelsdatter, described as a foster daughter (*plejedatter*).

#### 1891 census, Ski Parish

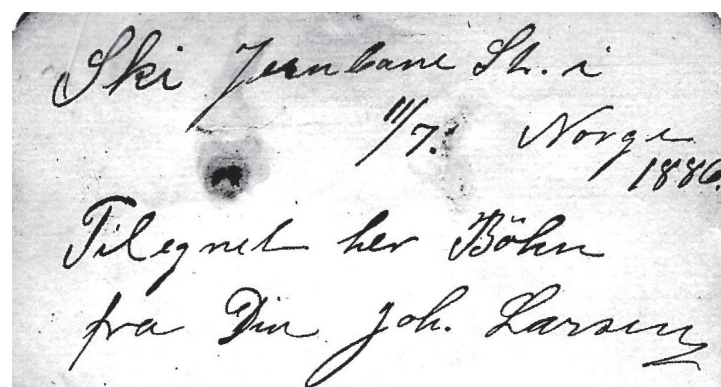
Ole Johan Larsen, railroad stoker, b. 1855 in Eidsvoll

Maren Gurine Olsdatter, wife, b. 1859 in Eidsvoll

Sofie Samuelsdatter, foster daughter, b. 1881 in Oppegård

#### Making a Living on the Østfold Line

The family legend about Johan Larsen working for the railroad turned out to be correct. At some point after 1891 he was promoted to train engineer because all subsequent



Ski Jernbane St. i  
11/7. Norge  
1886.  
Til dig her Bøhn  
fra Din Joh. Larsen

Brother-in-law's autograph message to Bernt, 11 July 1886

17 Eidsvoll Parish (Akershus, Norway), Klokkerbok nr. I 2, 1866-1871, *Konfirmerte* [Confirmations], p. 131, no. 14 (Ole Johan) and no. 34 (Bernt), 23 October 1870; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/497/80](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/497/80) : 11 November 2020).

18 1891 Norway census, Akershus County, Kråkstad Clerical District, Ski Parish, Tellingskrets 4, house 3, *Sander Mellem* (gnr. 134.2), person 6, Ole Johan Larsen household; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/52700/1745](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/52700/1745) : 11 November 2020).

# An 1886 Autograph Solves a Norwegian Mystery

records list Johan as a locomotive driver (*lokomotivfører*). He was associated with the Østfold Railroad Line, which first opened in 1879. It ran from Christiania south to Fredrikshald, passing through Ski, Moss, and Sarpsborg, among other stops.

Johan's employment might explain why he and Maren left Eidsvoll in the first place. His career, in fact, appears to have prompted several moves. Assuming the autograph message to Bernt Bonn implies residence, Maren and Johan lived in Ski from at least 1886 to 1891. By 1895 they had moved to the southern town of Sarpsborg, where they lived until 1904. That was their residence when enumerated in 1900.<sup>19</sup>

1900 census, Sarpsborg City

Johan Larsen, locomotive driver, b. 1855 in Eidsvoll

Maren Larsen, wife, b. 1861 in Eidsvoll

Sofie Larsen, foster daughter, b. 1881 in Oppegård

As the 1900 census testifies, the family adopted *Larsen* as their permanent surname sometime between 1895 and 1900. All records from 1900 onward (except one) list Maren and Sofie as Maren and Sofie Larsen rather than Maren Olsdatter and Sofie Samuelsdatter. This demonstrates how the transition from a patronymic to a surname system occurred in one family. Norway did not mandate surnames until 1923, but Norway as a society was already moving in that direction, especially in the cities.

While in Sarpsborg, Johan and Maren converted to the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church.<sup>20</sup> The Free Church was formed in Moss in 1877 as a presbyterian form of church government as opposed to the hierarchical structure of the

state church. It still exists today. Norwegian law required that people register their departure from the state church of Norway, so most parishes in Norway had a section in their records for such actions, called *Utmeldte af Statskirken*. Maren and Johan remained Free Lutherans (*Frimenigheden*) the rest of their lives.

In 1904, Maren and Johan moved from Sarpsborg to Moss, where they settled for good.<sup>21</sup> A domestic-migration record shows the family departed Sarpsborg on 29 June 1904 and arrived in Moss on 1 July 1904 to take up residence in the Poor District (*fattigkommune*) of the city.

## Johan & Maren residence timeline

1883 – Eidsvoll (marriage)

1886 to 1891 – Ski

1895 to 1904 – Sarpsborg

1904 to 1928 – Moss

Three years after the move to Moss, Maren Larsen died of heart disease (*hjertesygdom*).<sup>22</sup> She was only 47 years old. Johan lived quite a bit longer and died of cancer at age 72.<sup>23</sup> His sole heir was Sofie.

## Who was Sofie Samuelsdatter?

There is no evidence Maren and Johan had children of their own, so unfortunately it is unlikely any biological descendants will be discovered. Sofie, their adopted daughter, was born 25 April 1881 in Oppegård and baptized three months later in Ski.<sup>24</sup>

When Maren and Johan acquired Sofie is unknown, only that she was residing with them by 1891. Adoption procedures did not exist legally in Norway at that time, so arrangements of this sort tended to be private affairs.<sup>25</sup> Although Sofie is

19 1900 Norway census, Østfold County, Sarpsborg City, Tellingskrets 7, Urban residence 2, 579 Jernbane St., apartment 4, Johan Lars. household; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/36994/1888](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/36994/1888) : 11 November 2020).

20 Sarpsborg Parish (Østfold, Norway), Ministerialbok nr. 4, 1892-1899, *Udmeldte* [Leavers of the State Church], p. 292, nos. 27-28, Locomotive driver Johan Larsen and wife Maren Olsdatter, 31 October 1895; digital images, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/5484/28094/4](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/5484/28094/4) : 11 November 2020).

21 "Records of In-Out Migration for Moss, 1901-1905," City of Moss (Østfold, Norway), *Flytteprotokoll* nr. 1, p. 231, no. 94, Johan Larsen et. al.; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/69749/214](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/69749/214) : 11 November 2020).

22 "Obituaries and Probate Registers, 1906-1914" Moss Town Bailiff (Østfold, Norway), *Dødsfallsprotokoll* nr. 4, p. 21, no. 86, Maren Gurine Larsen, 13

August 1907; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/27441/23](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/27441/23) : 11 November 2020).

23 "Rygge lensmann, death register nr. 8, 1925-1929," Rygge Judicial District, Moss Municipality (Østfold, Norway), *Dødsfallsprotokoll* nr. 8, p. 66, no. 3, Locomotive driver Johan Larsen; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/27620/96](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/27620/96) : 11 November 2020).

24 Kråkstad Clerical District, Ski Parish (Akershus, Norway) *Ministerialbok*, 1880-1892, *Fødte og dopte* [Births & baptisms], p. 7, no. 6, Sofie, 10 July 1881; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/5847/10](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/5847/10) : 18 November 2020).

25 Sometimes local authorities did become involved in adoptions, typically in the cities. These would be captured in what are called *Fattigvesenet*, or "poverty protocols." Neither Ski nor Oppegård parishes have such records available online at Norway Digital Archives.

referred to as a *foster daughter* in all instances, this was an adoption as we understand it today. She continued to live with Johan even after Maren's death in 1907. The 1910 national census and 1914 Moss municipal census both document her living with her adoptive father, now widowed, and serving as the housekeeper.<sup>26</sup>

Sofie's biological parents were Samuel Andersen (b. 1842) and Mathea Johannesdatter (b. 1852).<sup>27</sup> Samuel was a Swedish immigrant working on the railroad. Most construction workers helping to build the Østfold Line in the 1870s and early 1880s were Swedish. His changing residences were all close to the railway, possibly reflecting his employer's shifting construction sites.<sup>28</sup>

The earliest record of Samuel dates to 1875 when the national census enumerated him lodging with Mathea's family at *Sætre* farm close to Opegård train station.<sup>29</sup> That is probably how he and Mathea met. They married 6 October 1876.<sup>30</sup> Their three known children were all daughters: Marie, Sofie, and Kristine. Their first-born child, a boy, Johannes, died after two days.<sup>31</sup>

Sofie was the middle daughter. When baptized in 1881, Samuel and Mathea were residing at a crofter property called *Island* in the Dal farm complex.<sup>32</sup> The *Dal* farm was in Ski, not

Opegård. However, Sofie's birth parish is uniformly reported as Opegård, so she probably was born at her maternal grandparent's house at *Sætre*. Both *Sætre* and *Dal* are close to the Opegård-Ski border and the two properties may have been only a mile or two apart.

It is unclear why Samuel and Mathea gave up Sofie for adoption. Possibly economic circumstances forced their hand. Sofie's baptism record describes her father as a former railway worker so he may have been unemployed for a period, although by 1884 he was a *husmann* (crofter).<sup>33</sup> In any case, Johan Larsen may have learned about the family's situation through their common employer.

Sofie's younger sister, Kristine Samuelsdatter (1883-1917), appears to have experienced a similar fate. The 1891 census enumerated her at age 8 living with a family headed by a *husmann* named Andreas Hansen.<sup>34</sup> He was hosting her as a foster daughter for payment (*haves for betaling*), supported by her mother who was described as a trader (*handlerske*), possibly meaning a store clerk or tradesperson.<sup>35</sup> If poverty forced the family to give up Sofie and Kristine, then it is difficult to understand how Mathea, presumably, was paying for Kristine's foster support. And why only her mother Mathea and not her father Samuel? Perhaps Samuel became disabled. This remains a bit of a mystery.

26 1910 Norway Census, Østfold County, City of Moss, Tellingskrets 6, Urban residence 49, Værelbakklokkerne 29, Apt. 2, Johane and Sofie Larsen; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/en/census/apartment/lf01036336006558](https://digitalarkivet.no/en/census/apartment/lf01036336006558) : 18 November 2020). 1914 Municipal Census, Østfold County, City of Moss, Tellingskrets 1, Urban residence 637, Værlegaten 29, Apt. 2, Johan and Sofie Larsen; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/en/census/apartment/lf01049501001885](https://digitalarkivet.no/en/census/apartment/lf01049501001885) : 11 January 2021).

27 Ski Parish (Akershus Co.), Births & baptisms, 1880-1892, p. 7, entry 6, Sofie.

28 Samuel resided at *Sætre* in 1875, Greverud Vestre in 1876, Søndre Dal in 1878, *Island* under Dal in 1881, and *Vevelstad* in 1884. The first two are in Opegård, the last three in Ski.

29 1875 Norway census, Akershus County, Nesodden Clerical District, Opegård Parish, Tellingskrets 4, house 40, Tudse under *Sætre* farm (lpn.315), Samuel Andersen in household of Johannes Hansen; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/52303/299](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/52303/299) : 11 November 2020).

30 Nesodden Parish (Akershus, Norway), *Ministerialbok* 1869-1879, Viede [Marriages], p. 168, no. 8, Samuel Andersen and Mathea Johannesdtr., 6 October

1876; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/539/115](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/539/115) : 8 November 2020).

31 Nesodden Parish (Akershus, Norway), *Ministerialbok* 1869-1879, Begravde [Burials], p. 209, no. 19, Johannes Samuelsen, 12 June 1877; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/539/115](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/539/115) : 8 February 2021).

32 Ski Parish (Akershus Co.), Births & baptisms, 1880-1892, p. 7, entry 6, Sofie.

33 Kråkstad Clerical District, Ski Parish (Akershus, Norway) *Ministerialbok*, 1880-1892, Født og døpte [Births & baptisms], p. 21, entry 14, Kristine, 22 June 1884; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/5847/24](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/5847/24) : 17 January 2021).

34 1891 Norway census, Akershus County, Nesodden Clerical District, Opegård Parish, Tellingskrets 4, house 20, Grytebråten (gnr. 42.2), person 5, Kristine Samuelsen in household of Andreas Hansen; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/52703/1818](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/52703/1818) : 11 November 2020).

35 Translation assistance was provided by genealogist Finn Karlsen (Trondheim, Norway) and Eidsvoll historian Simen Flyen.

# An 1886 Autograph Solves a Norwegian Mystery

Efforts to definitively locate Samuel and Mathea and their oldest daughter Marie in the 1891 census have been unsuccessful.

Samuel and Mathea's names appear in one last record when Marie was confirmed on 2 October 1892 at Ski Church.<sup>36</sup> Her name is given as *Marie Sand* while the parents are referred to as *Samuel Dal*, carpenter, and *Mathea Dal*. The last name difference might indicate that Marie was living with a separate family just like her sisters. There were nine residences associated with the *Sander Vestre* farm (*gårdsnummer* 134) in the 1891 census that could have been the basis for Sand as a farm name. (Remember, Maren and Johan were living with Sofie at *Sander Mellem* at that same time, so this was in their neighborhood.) What happened to Samuel and Mathea after 1892 is unknown.

None of the three sisters ever married. Marie became a household servant in Oslo and died in 1967.<sup>37</sup> Sofie died in Moss in October 1960 at age 79.<sup>38</sup> Kristine became involved with the Salvation Army in a position involving charity work in poor urban areas. In 1910, she was described as an unmarried *slumsøster* (welfare worker) in the southern city of Frederikshald with no regular place of residence.<sup>39</sup> She died of tuberculosis in Oslo in 1917.<sup>40</sup>

## Location is Everything in Genealogy as Well as Real Estate

Solving the mystery of Maren Olsdatter Bønsmoen (1860-1907), demonstrates that unconventional sources such as an

autograph book should not be overlooked in genealogical research, nor should foreign-language material deter the genealogist when there are so many translation resources available.

But the real lesson here is the importance of geography. Discovering Maren and Johan in Ski Parish explains why no further records post-marriage were ever found for them in their home district of Eidsvoll. Only by chancing upon a reference to their presence in a different location did the broad outline of their life story emerge. Relying upon geography is especially important in Norway where given and patronymic name combinations are common and farm names were often substituted for surnames in pre-20th century records.

---

**Steven Nelson Jonnes** is a native Minnesota who retired five years ago from a career with the federal government, where he was variously employed as a Chinese translator, intelligence analyst, program evaluator, performance manager, and strategic planner. He now works full-time on genealogy. Although Steve and his wife live in Ashburn, Virginia, he specializes in Norwegian and upper Midwest research. This is his fifth article in *Minnesota Genealogist*. You can follow Steve's blog at [www.jonnesgenealogy.com](http://www.jonnesgenealogy.com).

36 Kråkstad Clerical District, Ski Parish (Akershus, Norway) *Ministerialbok*, 1880-1892, Konfirmerte [Confirmations], p. 114, no. 26, Marie Sand, 2 October 1892; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/497/80](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/497/80) : 1 March 2021).

37 "Died 1951-2014," Norwegian Institute of Public Health (All of Norway), Oslo Municipality, no. 301, Marie Samuelsen, 14 October 1967; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/en/view/387/pc00000001854836](https://digitalarkivet.no/en/view/387/pc00000001854836) : 18 December 2020); extracted from Historical Population Register, Registration Center for Historical Data (RHD).

38 "Died 1951-2014," Norwegian Institute of Public Health (All of Norway), Moss Municipality, no. 104, Sofie Larsen, October 1960; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/387/pc00000001523683](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/387/pc00000001523683) : 20

November 2020); extracted from Historical Population Register, Registration Center for Historical Data (RHD).

39 1910 Norway census, Østfold County, Fredrikshald Municipality, Tellingskrets 19, Urban residence 16, Tistelsgate, apartment 2, Kristine Samuelsen; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/en/census/person/pf01036333014322](https://digitalarkivet.no/en/census/person/pf01036333014322) : 11 November 2020).

40 Vålerenga arish (Oslo, Norway), *Ministerialbok* 1899-1930, Begravde [Burials], p. 174, no. 20, slumsøster Kristine Samuelsen, 24 April 1917; digital image, *Digitalarkivet* ([digitalarkivet.no/view/25782/175](https://digitalarkivet.no/view/25782/175) : 18 November 2020).