

My Research Journal

Allen H Wald

Note:

I have sometimes been accused that I only wanted to dig up old skeletons from the Wald family closets. For the record I want to say that I really just wanted to see what was in that closet, no matter what it was. Furthermore, I have a great desire to find whatever else there is, good or bad, as long as it helps to tell the story of our family and preserve that history for future generations.

Along with archery, this research has become my other favorite pass time, and as my bow arm grows less steady I find my desire to learn about our family grows stronger. Therefore, I continue to write about what I find, and I hope those whom I write about will forgive me if there are mistakes that result. Nevertheless, even as our arrows don't always hit the center, at the end of the tournament we usually find that the majority of hits leave a well punctured mark around the middle of the target. So it will be, I hope, with this work.

Allen H Wald

My Discovery of Our Family in the Palestine Lutheran Congregation

In the summer of the year 2001 I traveled to Iowa for the third time in as many years. Previously I had met a woman named Florence Wheeler who lives in Cambridge (near Slater) who had been collecting genealogy about every single person who ever lived in Cambridge, and she had been doing this for many years. She is not a member of the LDS church, but she is every bit the expert genealogist that you'll find anywhere in Utah. She had one entire wall of her large living room filled with books and genealogies, indexes and files. The year before this she and I had looked through many of her materials for information about the Wald / Wold / Olson family with almost no success.

It was a sunny day and the Iowa summer was warm and humid. The corn in the fields was well over your shoulders, and traffic on I-35 was light. Cambridge is only a few miles off the freeway--right in the middle of the state. When you turn off the main highway into town you can see that main street is all of one block long. I knocked on Mrs Wheeler's door and after several minutes she answered. (I don't think they get too many out of town visitors). She lives in an old novelty / gift shop, and her home is filled with all kinds of trinkets and nick-knacks that seem to be left over from former days before she retired. She invited me in and we sat down and talked for a while. I reviewed some of my research through that year, things I had learned since the time that I visited the year before. I told her that I was just there to see what new information I could find. We discussed the land deeds that I had found concerning Ole J. Olson, my great great grandfather. He lived with his family just a few miles south of Cambridge on the south side of the Polk county line, and a few of their children had been born in Cambridge, or at least we know that their names were entered in the Story county records as having been born there. At some point in our lengthy conversation she told me that I should go over and visit with the pastor at the Palestine Lutheran church which is just south of the freeway on the main highway between Cambridge and Slater. She also sold me a small book containing the history of the Palestine congregation. I had looked at this book the previous year, but it was not completely indexed, and I didn't find what I was looking for. This time I looked a little more carefully and discovered that several of Ole J.'s children were listed as members of the congregational choir, and in one place the book states that Ole O. Wold had been a member and gone on to become a priest in the Fertile Iowa

congregation. At that point I knew I was on a hot new lead, and I had to pry myself away from this terribly talkative (wonderful) lady so I could pursue this new information.

It was now late in the afternoon when I got to the church, and I felt that old feeling of anxiety once again as I approached the building—the voice in my mind went something like: ‘what the heck am I doing’, ‘this is stupid’, ‘they’re going to think you’re such an idiot’. I brushed those thoughts aside, knocked on the door, and the pastor came out to meet me. I told him who I was and why I was there, and he took me into his clerk’s office and showed me the oldest record book of their congregation which began around the year 1865. We looked briefly through the book and found definite records of our family. I was thrilled to have actually held that original old book in my hands. He copied a couple of pages for me, and then he said that he needed to get back to his work, but that if I would come back the next day at 9:00 a.m. his secretary would be there and she could help me look through the book more thoroughly and copy anything that I wanted. So I thanked him and left. The next day I returned and copied several more pages from the old church book along with many other pages from a 100-year anniversary book that they had. As you will see, the church book was written in the Norwegian language, and there is one page in that book that I consider to be one of the three most important documents that I have found in all of my research regarding the Wald family. I have included a copy of this page below.

Anmärkingar.		Portuguese over: Menighedens Medlemmer.										Anmärkingar.	
Stemme-beret- telse	Naar optaget	Er afgaet	No.	Medlemmernes fulde Navn.	Født		Konf. sægt.	Fami- lie- Navn	Stemme- beret- telse	Naar optaget	Er afgaet		
					Naar.	Hvor.							
46	1868		129	Ole S. Olsen, Wold		Ardal	Kup.	78.	65	1871	Skjold 1878		
47	1868		130	Uddir Berthini Olsen Wold		Talgi	Kup.			1871			
48	1869		131	Jonas T. Larsen Øknerad		Høyland	Kup.	78.	1872				
	1869		132	Lina Larsen Øknerad		Kristiansund	Kup.			1872			
49	1870		133	Kristian Kristiansen Holm	77	Skjen	Kup.	78.	1872				
	1870		134	Augusta Høi, Holm		Lisbo	Kup.			1872			
50	1870		135	Lars Olsen Raben		Etne	Kup.		1872				
51	1870		136	Kornelius Petersen Haland	77	Leyd	Kup.		1872		død 1894		
52	1870	Le Liden 1872	+ 137	Lars Reinertsen Rødnv	75	Fylberg	Kup.	78.	1872		død 78		
53	1870		138	Anna Rødnv		Fylberg	Kup.		1872				
54	1870		139	Elling Halvorsen		Fylberg	Kup.	78.	1872				
55	1870		140	Rasmus Halvorsen					1872				

The document is a listing of individuals and families as they join the congregation. At the top of the page, #129 and #130 are our great great grand parents “Ole J. Olsen Wold and Udbjør Berthine Olsen Wold”. It also states that Ole was born in Årdal and Bertine, (a.k.a Bertha Gaard) was born in Talgø (also spelled: Talgje). They both formally joined the congregation in 1871, and this coincides with land records that show that Ole bought land shortly before that time. In fact, after I left the Palestine church I drove back over toward the land that Ole J. owned, and I discovered that his land was precisely one mile south and one mile east from the church. I had not noticed this the year before when I first met the current land owners because their farm house is on the other side of the raised freeway. The land that Ole J. owned is actually now bisected by the newly constructed freeway, and you can no longer see the church from the east side of the farm.

Why is this document so important? This is the only primary source documentation that I have ever found that lists the full names “Ole J. Olsen Wold”, including the farm name Wold, at the same time with his wife, giving her birth name “Udbjør Berthine”, also with his two surnames “Olsen Wold”. Perhaps even more important, the names of the parishes where they were each born are also given. When I saw this document I knew immediately that I had found the most telling proof that I have yet to this day—proof which validates all of the other documents and histories—so many of which were incomplete, uncertain, and ambiguous, and most of which came from secondary sources that could not be trusted completely. Furthermore, a history of this congregation has been kept over the years. Although Ole J. was not mentioned directly, his children were active and managed to appear in that history several times. It is also well documented that his son, our great grandfather, Ole Olson Wold was raised in this congregation, and this fact has been confirmed to me personally by Mrs Maylo Nervig who still lives in Slater and who is a cousin to our grandfather Ferdinand O. Wald.