

Volden, The Old Smoke House in the Meadow

Iver Lillemoe was born in the spring of the year 1773, in the beautiful glacial cut valley of Årdal Norway. His birth record is found in the records of the Lutheran Church from Hjelmeland parish which simply states: "Iver Olsen, born at Vallem, christened 23 May, 1773, in the church"¹¹. From this and other records we know for certain that Iver Lillemoe's father was named Ole. We also know that he was born at Vallem (later called Valheim) which is "one of the oldest farms in Årdal"¹². At this writing, there is significant uncertainty about the identity of Iver's father, Ole Vallem. The farm book from Årdal lists the family as: "Ola Valheimsvatne and wife Sofia Andersdtr., Children: Iver, born 1773 Anders, born 1784."¹³

This child, Iver, is the same person who would be called Iver Olsen Lillemoe our direct ancestor. Several lines of evidence¹⁴ indicate that Sofia Andersdatter was Iver's mother, however, another record indicates she married a second time in 1782 to Ola Toreson.¹⁵ This Ola may have been he who was later known as Ola Valheimsvatne, meaning: "Ole who lives at Valheim's lake." Therefore, Ola Valheimsvatne may have been Iver Lillemoe's father, but it seems equally likely that he was not. It is not known when Iver's father died.

11 From the Hjelmeland parish "kirkebok", FHL film #0126126, page 46, 1773, entry #28:

"Iver Olsen, born on the Vallem farm, christened 23rd May, in the church. Witnesses: Rasmus Åsenvigen, Peder Vallem, Peder Riveland, Mayia Hundness and Anna ibid"

12 Årdal, Gard og Folk, Sigurd Eikeland, 1971, volume 2, pg. 306.

13 Årdal, Gard og Folk, Sigurd Eikeland, 1971, volume 2, pg. 340.

14 1770 confirmations coincide with Ole Iversen Valde (#9--both were 16 years old in 1770). No other children between 1773 and 1782.

15 Ola Toreson was born in 1760 and would have been only 13 in 1773--too young to be Iver's father. Sofie Andersdatter was born in 1754 and would have been 19, old enough for her first marriage. Iver was with the family and listed as a child on the farm records in Øver Valheim.

Iver was the oldest son, so we can guess that his grandfather, by tradition, was also named Iver. An earlier census of 1758 lists an 'Iver Olson' in Årdal but there is no way to verify the connection. Eleven years later Iver's mother, Sofia Andersdatter, gave birth to Iver's only brother (half brother?), Anders, named after Sofia's father. Anders was christened on "the fourth Sunday after the Holy Trinity" which was 4 July, 1784. No other children of this family are known.

Iver Olsen Lillemoe appears to have received a good education because later in his life he worked as a vaccinator, preparing small pox vaccine and administering vaccinations to all of the children in Årdal, Hjelmeland, and Fister. Little did he know that 200 years later, during our generation, small pox would be declared eradicated from the planet, due in part to his efforts. In 1801, a complete census was taken of all the people in Norway, but Iver Olsen was not listed in any of the farms of Årdal. There was one individual named Iver Olsen, age 28, listed as a soldier serving in Kristiansand. This could have been the same person, but we do not know for sure. After the turn of the century, Iver Olsen returned home and married Siri Rasmusdatter on "the first Sunday after the new year", January, 1803. Together they lived at Lillemoe which was part of the farm called Vadla, near the home of Iver's parents. Lillemoe was located on the hillside near the mountains and the name literally means "Little Mountain". Iver Olsen was known as Iver Lillemoe, and he lived at Lillemoe for the rest of his life. In 1804 Siri she gave birth to her first and only child whom they called Anna Iversdatter. Anna grew up and married Helge Olsen Lid in 1825. Many of their children and grandchildren also emigrated to America, and we know of their descendants who survive today.

When Anna was still a young child, Iver Lillemoe fathered a son with another woman. This boy, the only son of Iver Lillemoe, was named Ole after his grandfather, and he was christened 11 March, 1808: "Ole Iversen". The boy grew up near his father, but not in the same home. His mother, Guro Olsdatter from Strand, had been working as a servant on a nearby farm. Guro married in 1814 with Torgils Halvorsen Bergeland, and they raised Ole together on the farm called Lille-Vadla. Guro had one daughter with Torgils whom they named Kari, born 25 December, 1820.

Despite the affair with Guro, Iver Lillemoe continued to live with his wife Siri for many years afterward. In the local census of 1835, Iver's wife, Siri, was said to be sickly. She died on 11 December, 1839. Iver Lillemoe married a second time in 1842 with Magla Olsdatter from Jørmeland. After a good long life he died at the age of 80 on 3 January, 1854.

The most remarkable thing to say about Iver Lillemoe's son, Ole Iversen, is that he grew up to become a master on the fiddle. In fact, he was so expert that they called him

"Spel Ola" which means "The Master Player, Ola" (see the story of Spel Ola). During these times there wasn't much entertainment out in the country, and it was a long journey by land and boat to the nearest city. The people in the valley no doubt enjoyed his music when he played at their special occasions. On 20 November, 1830, Ole Iversen married Siri Pedersdatter Hagen. Siri gave birth to their first son, Ole, on 8 January, 1831. After this time Spel-Ola and his family lived on the farm called Volden which was part of the Sedberg farm. Spel-Ola's proper name was Ole Iversen Volden, but in "The Wald History" he was named Ole Peter Vold. The origin of the middle name "Peter" is not known, but there can be little doubt that these two are the same person. Together Ole Iversen and his wife Siri would eventually have eight children whom they raised "in an old converted smoke house with a turfed roof". The youngest of the eight children, Andreas was born in 1849. In the story of Spel Ola, and in the farm records, Volden was called a "husmannsplass" which means "cotters farm".

Early in the year 1854, the oldest son, Ole, took some of his younger brothers with him and sailed to America to realize their dream of owning their own land and running their own farms. Their grandfather, Iver Lillemoe, had died earlier that year, remember, and their father Spel Ola did not have a good reputation with the people of Årdal. We do not know exactly when Spel Ola went to prison, but we know that it must have been after 1855 because the family is listed in the local census of that year. His death is recorded in the prison church record of the Kristiansand tukthus parish as: "Ole Iversen Volden, Hjelmeland Sogn, died 25 February, 1860". This must have been a terrible hardship for their family because they were poor and they did not own the land that they farmed. The economy of south western Norway was very depressed at the time, and there were not many opportunities for young men who wanted to start a family. According to Cleve Darling, all eight of the children would eventually leave Norway. In 1861, their mother Siri would then be the only one of the family left in Norway. Finally, late that year, this mother of eight children, who just a few short years before had held so much hope and promise in her arms, died alone on Christmas day, probably of a broken heart more than anything else. The place called Volden, the place that was literally our name sake, was then torn down and the land was sold.

The oldest son, who was our direct ancestor through name and lineage, was called Ole Olsen Volden. From "The Wald History" by Cleve Darling he is known to us as Ole J. Vold, but when he came to America he used the name Ole J. Olsen. The family name was latter changed to Wold and then to Wald by his children. Both of these names are variations of the historical farm names. It is not very likely that the origin of this name is related to the German word "wald" which means forest. A more likely origin is from the Norwegian word "voll" or "vollen" which means "a meadow or a grassy field".

It is written in the Gaard family history that Ole J. Olsen Volden met Udbjörg Bertha Gaard while they sailed to America aboard the same ship. The two were married shortly after their journey on 15 September, 1855 in Ottawa Illinois. More of their story is told in "The Wald History" by Cleve Darling to whom we owe much gratitude, for without her work it would have been very difficult to research this side of our ancestry.

Evidence for the Vold genealogy line.

There exists a substantial paper trail which confirms our ancestry from Norway. To begin, our great grandfather was known to us directly through testimony from our grandfather, Ferdinand Oliver Wald, and through "The Wald History" by Cleve Darling, written in 1939. His name was Ole Olson Wold. We know that he served as a Lutheran minister in Moreland Illinois and Fertile Iowa from 1891 to 1908 when he died at the age of 46. On his letter head in the church he called himself O. O. Wold. In the book "Norwegians in America", in the chapter which lists priests, O. O. Wold is listed as a priest in Fertile Iowa. In this same listing it states: "His father was from Årdal, Ryfylke". Cleve Darling also confirms that the family was from "Ordahl". The latter spelling is an English translation of Årdal, and shows the correct way to pronounce the name as a Norwegian would say it. "Ryfylke" is the name of the judicial district which includes the township and parish of Årdal in Rogaland county. Emigration records from Årdal show that Ole Olsen, son to Ole Iversen and Siri Pedersdatter did in fact emigrate to America in 1854. Finally, the church records from the Palestine Lutheran church of Story Co. Iowa contain many references to the family of Ole J. Olsen Wold and his wife Udbjörg Bertine. This church record also confirms that Ole J. Olsen was born in Årdal Norway and his wife was born on the island of Talgje in Finnøy parish.

Cleve Darling goes on to describe three generations of the family who lived in Norway. She states that the grandfather was named "Iver Lillemo", he married and had one child named "Ole Peter Vold", this son married "Siri" and together Ole and Siri had eight children. "Ole J. Vold", the oldest son, immigrated to America in "about the year 1850" where he married "Bertha" in 1854 "after a short courtship".

In the Årdal Bygdebok (farm book) a family which coincides is described very well with only a few variations. Iver Lillemo is listed as Iver Olson Litlemo, his parents are listed, it states that he married, his wife had one daughter, and that he also had an illegitimate son with Guro Olsdatter from Strand. The son's name is listed as Ola Iverson Volden who coincides with Ole Peter Vold. This Ola married Siri Pedersdatter. The eight grandchildren of Iver Lillemo are also listed with slight variations in order and

spelling. The table which follows lists the three generations as they are found in these three different sources for comparison.

Having established that this is the right place and time, the fact that the entire family described by Cleva Darling is listed in the Årdal farm book, and that they all appear in the original parish records, is very strong evidence that this is the actual family of our ancestors. The Årdal farm book also states that Ola (grandson to Iver Lillemo) emigrated to America in 1854 which is the same time frame given by Cleva Darling. Furthermore, Cleva Darling states that Iver Lillemo "lived all his life" at Årdal. The original parish records confirm this, and the Årdal farm book states that Iver lived on Lillemoe for 70 years.

We might also consider the names of the eight children. The custom in Norway at the time was to name the first son after his paternal grandfather and the second son after his maternal grandfather. The first daughter was named after the maternal grandmother and the second was named after the paternal grandmother, and so on. In this family the custom was followed with the exception of the first son, Ole, who was named after his father and great grandfather, Ole. The second child, Siri, was named after her maternal grandmother, Siri Torkelsdatter. The third child, Peder, was named after his maternal grandfather, Peder Pedersen. The fourth child, Guro, was named after her paternal grandmother, Guro Olsdatter. The fifth child, Torkel, was named after his maternal great grandfather, Torkel. The sixth child, Martha, was possibly named after Guro's mother, Marta Sjursdatter, although there may have been a different Martha because the name Martha Volden does appear on some of the church records as a witness of christenings. Ole the younger was also named after his father.

The naming of the children does not provide evidence to link the family to us. However, their names help us to link them to the earlier generations. Unfortunately, no church records earlier than 1760 exist for Årdal, and the records kept between 1760 and 1800 contain very few details.

The following table shows the family of Iver Lillemoe as listed in "The Wald History" by Cleva Darling, in the Årdal farm book (1971), and in the original Årdal parish records for comparison. Although there are slight variations in spellings and in the order of the children, these three coinciding records provide very good evidence that this family from Årdal is in fact the same family that was described by Cleva Darling.

by Allen H Wald

	Cleva Darling	Årdal Farm Book	Årdal Parish Records
Grand Father :	Iver Lillemo	Iver Olson Litlemo born 1773	Iver Olsen Lillemoe born 23 May, 1773
Father :	Ole Peter Vold	Ola Iverson Vollen born 1808	Ola Iversen Volden chr. 11 March, 1808
Mothe r:	Siri	Siri Pedersdtr. Vollen born 1809	Siri Pedersdtr. Volden chr. 5 Oct. , 1807
Childr en: 1	Ole J. Vold	Ola Olson Vollen born 1831	Ole Olsen Volden, born 8 Jan, 1831
2	Sarah	Siri born 1833	Serine born 8 Sept, 1833
3	*Torkel	Peder born 1836	Peder born 29 Nov, 1836
4	Gurina	Guro born 1838	Guro born 12 July, 1838
5	*Peter	Torkel born 1841	Torkild born 7 Feb, 1841
6	Martha	Marta born 1844	Martha born 10 Jan, 1844

7	Oley	Ola born 1846	Ole born 19 Oct, 1846
8	Andrew	Andreas born 1849	Andreas born 27 June,1849

*The order of Torkel and Peter were the only children out of place in the history by Cleve Darling.