



# Norway: We are getting married!

## Norwegian marriage traditions and records

### Objectives:

1. Gain an understanding of marriage customs in Norway
2. Gain an appreciation and understanding for one's ancestors' journey towards marriage
3. Get a feel for the various marriage records, formats, and content

### History:

1030: Christianity introduced church weddings

1200s: Illegal to live together without being married

1260: "Gulatingloven", first written law regarding marriage

1536: Reformation

1589: Marriage law: church wedding was needed to be considered legal

- Marriage solemnized in the presence of clergy and two witnesses on two occasions; betrothal and wedding
- Living together was considered evil, shameful, and was punishable by church discipline:
  1. Warned by the priest
  2. Prevented from taking the sacrament
  3. Could be banished from the church
  4. If a child was born before marriage, the couple could be fined
  5. Fines could be reduced if they were going to get married

The punishments varied from parish to parish depending on the views of the local parish priest. Some were much stricter (and less charitable) than others.

Later: common to move in together as soon as they were engaged

1845: Dissenter Law: church leaders from "other churches" could now perform marriages

1895: Civil marriage- by a judge, was now acceptable

### The Process: social and economic

- Couples are usually from the same community- parents could have a say in the selection of a spouse
- Usually someone from the same social standing; reasons "not just pride"—poorer people likely to die in epidemics, have less food and less resistance to illness
- Upper classes may have to look outside their parish boundaries for a spouse

### How did our ancestors meet?

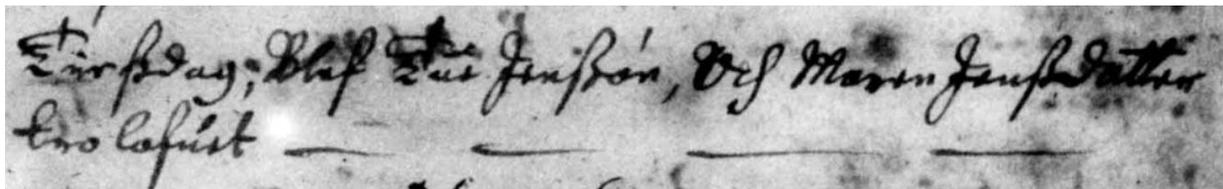
- Youth met during their confirmation preparations (most 14-17 years of age; although

some were as young as 13 and some as old as 50!)

- Later while attending church
- Met neighbors or persons within reasonable walking distance or “horse and buggy distances”
- Within rowing distance (along the coast or bigger rivers)
- Met while working on various farms
- Barn dances☺

### Engagements

- The engagement was a contractual agreement
- It was binding enough that if broken, the “jilted” person could ask for “compensation” from the person leaving
- Two men close to the couple would be selected to be sponsors at the wedding
- Banns were read and posted on the church door, usually three Sundays before the wedding



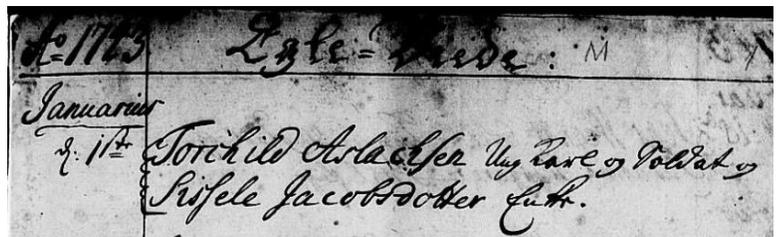
### Brudeferd/Bryllup- Marriage and Wedding

Brudeferd: The bride’s journey to her new home.

- Invitations would go out
- Guests might bring food for the meals, and a good cook might be found
- The bride might be dressed in the loft and brought down (after a fiddler) to greet the groom and guests. The bride could wear a bunad or national costume, but some wore a black dress as well. She often carried a hymn book and handkerchief. The groom wore black pants and jacket, and would have a pocket watch with a chain over his tummy—could also wear bunads.
- The journey to the church was accompanied with shooting (rifles) and shouts- done to express joy, but also to scare off evil spirits who could hurt the couple

Weddings usually in the fall: enough time and provisions for a wedding

- Needed ample food and drink
- Harvest just over
- Cattle were fat and provided plenty of milk, cheese, and butter
- People needed rest after the harvest
- Weddings lasted 4-5 days depending on the financial situation of the family



## Food

- Extended family and friends would often bring: milk, butter, cheese, lefser, cakes, rømme for rømmegrøt
- The immediate family would provide meat and/or fish
- Spekekjøtt: dry-cured, salted, and dried meat: pig, lamb, cattle, moose, reindeer, elk, and horse
- Drink: beer, wine, and strong drink

A widow/widower had to show proof of probate in order to remarry. Probate dates could be noted in the new marriage entry; in the remarks column.

## Vocabulary: various words for engaged and married/marriage



\*pay attention to the six different "t"s

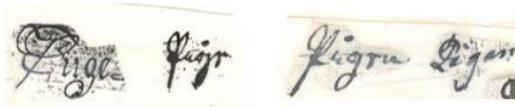
Ungkarl-ungkarlen: bachelor



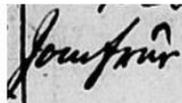
Hr- Mr.



Pige-pigen: maiden



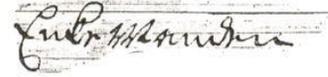
Jomfrue-"upperclass  
maiden"



Enkemanden-  
widower



Enkemanden-  
widower



Enkm.-  
widower



Enke-widow



Enken-widow



Where to locate the records:

[www.digitalarkivet.no](http://www.digitalarkivet.no)

- Free
- Searchable in English

There will be "very short tutorial" on the opening page of the Digitalarkivet.no. Just click on the "Trace your ancestry."



To further your learning:

[https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Norway\\_Genealogy](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Norway_Genealogy)

[https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Norway\\_Marriage\\_Record\\_Search\\_Strategy\\_1500-1813](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Norway_Marriage_Record_Search_Strategy_1500-1813)

[https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Norway\\_Church\\_Records](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Norway_Church_Records)

[https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Norwegian\\_Research\\_Websites](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Norwegian_Research_Websites)

[https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Norwegian\\_Genealogical\\_Word\\_List](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Norwegian_Genealogical_Word_List)