

A Brief History of the Ellingbø Farms and Hotels in Vang i Valdres

By James Ellingboe

The Ellingbø Name

The Ellingbø name is unique to farms of Vang i Valdres in Oppland Fylke, Norway. It is derived from the combination of the male given name "Elling" or "Erling" (Old Norse "Erlingr") and the word "bø" (Old Norse *bær*), which means farm. Originally it may have been "Erlingsbær," but the possessive "s" was dropped in early years. The name "Ellingsbø" can be found in Heidal, but in Vang it has always been spelled without the "s". In various documents the name has been spelled "Ellinghbøø" (1489), "Elingbøø" (1528), "Ellingbøø" (1578 and 1592), "Elinngbøø" (1604), and more recently "Ellingbøe" and "Ellingbø," the current spelling in Norway. Many of those who emigrated to the United States used the spellings "Ellingbøe" or "Ellingbøe" before changing to the most usual Americanized spelling of "Ellingboe." There are a few Ellingbø descendants in the US and Canada who use the spelling "Ellingbo."

The Ellingbø Farms

The Ellingbø farms lie in the middle of the Vang parish, just above the Vange parsonage. In the past, the Ellingbø lands went down to Lake Vangsmjøsa on both sides of the church property, which was probably a gathering place for worship in pre-Christian times. The farm was a central part of the community. It may have been one large estate in ancient times. Prehistoric artifacts, mostly from the Viking times, have been

found on Vange, Klokkarhaugen, Grindaheim and Skøre, at a lower level, closer to the lake. There is also a burial mound next to the road on farm number 34/1, Skøre.

In old Norse times, the farm was divided into two registered farms, *Nørre* (North) and *Sørre* (South) Ellingbø. (The old usage of North and South in Vang actually approximated the West and East compass directions, respectively, along the axis of the lake.) Cultivated land became divided into parcels and strips that were intermingled between the two Ellingbø farms, and to some degree between *Nørre* Ellingbø and Vange (the parsonage farm), until the time of the reassignment of property lines (*jordskiftet*) in 1864.

By the middle of the 1600s, *Nørre* Ellingbø was divided into three farms – *Nigarden* (farm number 33/1),

Bøkkadn (on *Bøkkø*) (numbers 31 and 33/3 - 33/4), and *Nordigarden* (33/5). From *Nørre* Ellingbø, a smaller part, *Haugadn*, was split off to become farm number 31 *Haugo*. At this time *Bøkkadn* was divided into farm number 3 *Bøkkadn* (half of the earlier farm), number 4 (a fourth part) which later became part of number 5 *Nordigarden*, and *Haugadn* (on *Haugo*), which became farm number 31, with a farmyard down near the lake and *Lundsplassene*. *Nigarden* was not divided, but a smaller part, number 6 *Ellingbøhaugen*, which included earlier tenant farms, was split off in 1904. Also, in the 1600s, *Søre* Ellingbø was divided into two farms. After *jordskiftet* in 1864, the houses in *Søre* Ellingbø *Uppigarden* were moved about 450 meters down towards the northeast, to the east side of the *Gullringen* fields, about 150



Ellingboe-Nordigarden Ellingbø 1900
Photo Courtesy of James Ellingboe

meters up from Vangsmjøsa. There the cultivated lands for this farm were brought together. The name of this farm then became Skøre, and since about 1935-1940 this has been used as the family name.

Cultivated land at Vange and below the Ellingbø farmyards is tilled easily, consisting of black slate-bearing topsoil in the lower areas and more gravel-bearing soil above the houses. At Skøre the soil is sandy. The grazing land above the fenced-in lands was common land for the whole Vang parish, but it appears that the woodland was divided into parcels allocated to individual farms about 1700, or earlier. Between the small farms (on each of the larger farms), the woodlands were common land somewhat longer – on Ellingbø until 1739. The outlying pastures, and land that was mowed at summer farms in the mountains, was used by everyone. Tenant farmers went here and there in the mountains, wherever they wanted to go, among other places under the mountain Grindafjell, but by around 1910 to 1935, public use of outlying pastures had ended. After the *Heimlijordskiftet*, each farm had strips of land that extended up to 2 km from the old farmstead, to about 800 meters above sea level, which they could fence in, while there was common grazing above.

All farmers had a right to fish in the Lake Vangsmjøsa, east and west of the Vange parish. On Lake Helin and other waters in Vang, the farms were allotted specific evenings for fishing. These rights were sometimes sold and the farmer who owned the fishing rights were entitled to a fourth of the fish caught by the person who purchased the rights. For many years the fishing at Helin was at the stream near Grøvsstøla until St. Lawrence's Day (August 10th). Later, the fishing time was extended until the Saturday

closest to August 24th. The rules for fishing rights changed through the years and were complicated. The abundance of fish in Helin is illustrated by the report that, on an evening around 1908, Ivar Ivarson Ellingbø, from Bøkkø, with Helge Helgeson Ellingbø and Endre Knutson Syltevik, caught 72 fish near Grøvsstøla.

That same evening they also fished at Strø (the far end of Helin), where they caught 48 fish, from ½ to 1 kg each. They still had four evenings left, and they shared the fish they caught.

From ancient times there has been an Ellingbø summer farm at Ellevstøla on the Southwest side of Helin. Marit and Helge T. Ellingbø built a cabin called "Helgebu" by the road at Ellevstøla. This is now owned by Leif and Siri-Gro Solemsli. Helge T. Ellingbø's uncle, Anders Helgesen Ellingbø, built a cabin down the hillside, closer to the lake at Ellevstøla. Anders' cabin was inherited by his daughter Magdelene, then by other family members until it was leased and then sold to a German family.

Around 1830 the summer farm of Sygarden was moved to Nørre Smådalen. Bøkkadn, Nigarden and Nordigarden had summer farms in Brattsete, northwest of Ellevstøla, until 1850. Nordigarden and Sygarden had autumn farms at Skåldungo, Nigarden at Strønden, Skøre (Uppigarden) at Hødnstad, Bøkkadn at Syrpesæte until 1927, then at Grøvsstøla, and Sygarden had a spring farm at Tango until about 1900. Uppi-Haugen or



*Helgebu at Ellevstøla on Lake Helin 1967
Photo By James Ellingboe*

Ellingbøhaugen, 33/6, took over the old summer farm of Nigarden on Skåldungo in 1904.

The Ellingbø Hotels

The first person to take in travelers at Vang was Per Odnes, who built a two-story house on a plot of Ellingbø land in 1867. He called it Vangs hotel. The second floor was used for guests. In the summer of 1885, Torstein Helgesen Ellingbø started to build the Fagerli hotel, with 12 beds. It was finished in the spring of 1886. On a rocky mountainside cliff at Kvamskleiven, the dramatic cleft through which the main road to Bergen passed, a sign was painted that advertised the Fagerli hotel. After marrying Sigrid Holien in 1886, they managed the hotel together. Torstein also operated a country store from about 1890 and a taxidermist workshop. In a special room at the hotel he had a large display of stuffed wild animals and birds. In 1919, Torstein's son Helge took over the Fagerli hotel, the farm Nordigarden Ellingbø and the country store.

In 1891, Ola Før built the Grindaheim hotel in the classic Swiss style that was especially popular in



*Ellingboe Country Store With Stuffed Moose 1967
Photo By James llingboe*

Scandinavia at that time. It was located between the lake and road, just a short walk west of the Fagerli hotel. Ola and his wife Gjartrud operated it as a hotel, way station and postal station. In 1906 there were rooms for 20 guests. When Ola died, Gjertrud and her daughter Ingrid Før managed the hotel, but after Ingrid married Ivar I. Søndrol in 1910, running the hotel became burdensome and Ingrid and Ivar began to take in guests at their farm. Ingrid was skilled with foreign languages and was able to attract tourist traffic. Until her death, many tourists came to the Søndrol farm. The Grindaheim hotel was eventually sold to director Lem and his wife in 1920, but he left his wife, who managed it alone until she sold it to Helge Torsteinson Ellingbø about 1921-1923. After Helge's purchase of the Grindaheim hotel, he operated both of his hotels under that name. To distinguish the two hotels from one another, the one closer to the lake was called the Grindaheim Sommerhotell because it was only open during summer months.

In 1931, Helge T. Ellingbø built Hjørnegarden next to Fagerli. A

modern country store was on the first floor and a guest room and private room were on the second floor. Helge married Marit Nilsdotter Nordaker in 1935. She had taken a business college degree in 1919 and had office and kitchen experience as well as six years

incident when one of the Nazi soldiers threw his machine gun onto the large antique wooden table and she scolded him. He was about to shoot her when an officer came down the stairs and interceded.

There are many stories about wartime in Vang. Marit was well-known to have been involved in smuggling food, which was rationed and in short supply. She and others went from farm to farm with back packs collecting food. This was a dangerous thing to do at that time. After the war, the increase in tourism demanded modernization, so they rebuilt the old Fagerli hotel in 1947, to make it suitable for guests during the winter. All of the rooms and hallways were paneled and they decorated everything in the Valdres style, with antique cupboards and other furniture. At the same time they installed hot and cold running water in all rooms, baths in three rooms, and common baths and water in both levels of the main building. The old Fagerli had delco lights, which were battery operated, until 1941 when



*Grindaheim Hotel (Fagerli) 1967
With Back Entrance to Store in Hjørnegarden in Center
Photo By James llingboe*

they installed electric lights throughout, cold rooms in both hotels, and electric appliances for hotel operation. In 1947 they purchased and installed a modern electric laundry. At Grindaheim (the summer hotel), they built a large new dining room with a magnificent view over Vangsmjøsa in 1937. An auditorium was built in 1937, and hot and cold running water was installed in all rooms. Following official recognition as a tourist hotel in 1948, both hotels were renamed the Grindaheim Turisthotell.

After Helge's death in 1958, his wife Marit continued to operate the hotels, farm and country store. A new living room with a fireplace was built in 1961 and four new guest rooms were added. In a real estate transfer with Vang township in 1968, Marit gave up Lindalen for use by the town for a community house, and in return she received 32/2 Klukkarhaugen, the first school house in Vang, protected as an historical building, with the responsibility to maintain it.

Klukkarhaugen lies just across the road from the winter hotel and was used for some time as a gift shop. In 1970 Marit Ellingbø turned over the operation of the businesses to the daughters of Gina, her sister-in-law. Marit Solemsli ran the hotel and farm from 1970 to 1978, while Synnøve Thorsrud managed the store from 1970-1987. Leif Solemsli Jr. went to England to study culinary arts and returned to take responsibility for managing the hotels. He undertook major additions and modernization of the hotel with a consortium of financial backers. Unfortunately, the hotel went bankrupt during a period when tourist business declined for all resort destinations in Norway. He managed the country store from 1987 to 1999. Eventually, the hotel became a refugee center, housing people from Bosnia and other nations. Leif worked as a manager at the refugee center.

The summer hotel was inherited by Ina Solemsli and stood empty for nearly ten years. It was eventually

sold in 2000 to the Grann family. In 2002 the summer hotel was in the final stage of complete renovation. This involved modernization and restoration of the historical integrity of the hotel. In April 2008 the name of the hotel was changed to Grann Hotell <<http://www.grannhotell.no/>>, managed by Trine Grann as a conference hotel, for groups of six or larger.

Notes: Information was taken from Oluf Rygh's Norske Gaardnavne, Anders Frøholm's Valdres Bygdebok 1, Del A, Gardar og slekter i Vang and from Knut Hermundstad's chapter in Valdres Bygdebok 5.

"Ellingboe Store marks centennial anniversary," by Carl Narvestad appeared in Budstikken May 1987.

For further information about the Ellingboe (Ellingbø) history and genealogy, contact the author by e-mail at Jim@Ellingboe.



*Modern Additon to Grindaheim Hotel 1980
With Grindafjell in Background
Photo Courtesy of JamesEllingboe*

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