

### History of the Ellingbø hotels in Vang i Valdres

The first person to take in travelers at Vang was Per Odnnes, who built a two-story house on a plot of Ellingbø land in 1867. He called it Vangs hotell. 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. After marrying Sigrid Holien, they managed the hotel together in an exemplary way. Torstein also operated a country store and a taxidermist workshop. In a special room he had a large collection 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 Grindeheim hotell in the classic Swiss style that was especially popular in Scandinavia at that time. The was located between the lake and road, just a short walk west of the Fagerli hotel. It was operated by Ola and his wife Gjartrud 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 for awhile, but after Ingrid married Ivar I. Søndrol in 1910, running the hotel became burdensome. Instead, Ingrid an Ivar Søndrol took in guests at their farm. Ingrid was good with foreign languages and was able to attract tourist traffic. Until her death, she had many tourists coming to the Søndrol farm. The Grindaheim hotel was sold to director Lem and his wife in 1920, but he left his wife to manage it alone and she sold it to Helge Torsteinson Ellingbø in 1922-1923.

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 Grindaheim Sommerhotell or "Sumarhotellet, 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 at the Fagernes Turisthotell. With such a background, she was an excellent choice to become the hostess at the Grindaheim and Fagerli hotels. In 1941 they had a modern electric bakery installed at Fagerli. During the war, the hotels served many persons who came to the countryside from Oslo. Also, at times, the hotel was commandeered by the Nazis. As an anecdote, Marit told me (Jim Ellingboe) that one of the Nazi soldiers had thrown his machine gun onto the large antique wooden table and she scolded him. He was about to shoot her when a more civilized 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 hotell 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 warm and cold water in all rooms at Fagerli and baths in three rooms, and common baths and water in both levels of the main building. The old Fagerli had delco lights until 1941. Then they installed electric lights everywhere, 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 warm and cold running water was installed in all rooms. After 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 Marit received 32/2 Klokkehaugadn, a protected historical building, with the responsibility to maintain it. Klokkehaugen lies just across the road from the winter hotel and was used for some time later by Marit Solemsli as a gift store. In 1970 she 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 managed the store from 1970-1987. Leif Solemsli, Jr., went to England to study culinary arts and returned to take

the responsibility of managing the hotels. He undertook major additions and modernization of the hotel with a consortium of financial backers. Unfortunately, the hotel went bankrupt when tourist business decreased 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 I (Jim Ellingboe) was privileged to be given a tour of the hotel, which was in the final stage of complete reconstruction and modernization. What was so impressive was the combination of cutting edge modernization and restoration of the historical integrity of the hotel. In April 2008 the name of the hotel was changed to Grann Hotell, managed by Trine Grann as a conference hotel, for groups of six or larger.

Most of this information was taken from the Valdres Bygdebok 5, Part 1, pages 250-251.