

# The Mandts of Upper Telemark

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All of us who are of the Norwegian Mandt family can trace our lines back to Mikkel Lauritzson Mandt and his wife, Else Larsdatter Resen. Their children married into the Norwegian families who had populated the valleys and hillsides of Upper Telemark since before recorded time, and thus began our particular and unique family. Many legends have been told of Mikkel and Else, and they are still enchanting us today. Discoveries and research have greatly added to what we know of the first two generations. I will retell this story, sharing the latest information available, and repeating the wonderful tales of mystery and intrigue that we have all enjoyed. Our family story must begin with the interesting lives of Mikkel Mandt and Else Resen.

The earliest account of Mikkel Mandt is from the *kirkebog* of Thisted, in Jylland (Jutland), Denmark, dated 15 April 1692. It states that on this day Mickel (Mikkel), the son of Lauritz (Lars) Rasmussøn, Guldsmiets, and Engel Mickelsdatter, was baptised. This is followed by the 26 October 1694 baptism of Lisbet, daughter of Lauritz Rasmussøn Guldsmiets and Engel Mickelsdatter. (Thisted *kyrkobog*)

These baptismal records give us three new possible clues about Mikkel's family: the father of Lauritz was Rasmus; Mikkel had a sister Lisbet; and Mikkel and Lisbet might have had an older brother. Accepted practice was to give the firstborn son the same name as the husband's father, and the second son was named after the wife's father. Consequently, there may have been an older brother Rasmus. Nothing has yet been found to confirm this. If this first son Rasmus did not exist, it is possible that Engel brought the more prestigious name into the family, as sons often took the mother's family name if it was the "finer" one. This was done by Engelbret in the next generation.

The name "Mandt" has been found as early as the 1500s in Denmark, and from the 1600s in Østersjøen in Poland and towards the border of Russia, and south from Denmark into Germany. At this time (2005), there has been no proven connection from any of these known Mandt's to our own "Norwegian" Mikkel Mandt. (Mandt, Eva 2005)

I must point out that there is no proof that the Mandt name came from Lauritz and not from Engel. Were they both or singly German, or were they Danes? Family tradition says the Mandt name came from Holsten, Germany. Mandt is a name usually found in Germany today, but documentation proving our ancestor, Mikkel Mandt, was of German parents has not yet been found. Where were Lauritz, and his wife Engel, born? We have no written evidence of Lauritz or Engel prior to these baptismal records. Their marriage and individual birth records are undiscovered. In Norway, few used the name of Mandt after 1800. Mandt emigrants are known by both the surname of Mandt, but many carry the farm names from Telemark.

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Civil records (tax and silversmith guild rolls) from Kristiansand, Norway, confirm that Lauridtz Manth (Lars Rasmusson Mandt), Guldsmed, resided there in 1697, 1698, and 1700, and 1702. No records have yet been found in Denmark, Germany, or elsewhere, showing apprenticeship, training, or guild membership of Lars as a goldsmith, although Lars was named as a goldsmith at his children's baptisms in Denmark. The last documenting of Lars was in 1702, and so it is believed that he died in Kristiansand, after 1702 and before 1717.

New discoveries in 2004 by Eva Mandt have provided us with an entirely new story of Mikkel's primary family. Engel Mikkelsdr. was widowed in Kristiansand, and in 1718 she remarried the goldsmith Niels Pedersen Dorph. This discovery came from several sources, but not the parish books, which were burned when the Kristiansand church burned in 1734. It was in 1723 that the goldsmith Niels Pedersen Dorph lost his home to debt, and it went to Claus Jørgensen Horst. This transaction names the step-daughter of Niels to be "Elisabeth Niels Christoffersen" (Lisbet Larsdr Mandt). In the book "Guldsmedfaget på Sørlandet" by Jakob Friis, 1975, Niels Pedersen Dorph is further identified.

Niels Christoffersen Dorph died in Kristiansand, 12 January 1753. Niels Dorph had fashioned a silver pot or cup for Domkirken in 1721, and in 1726 he made a silver bowl or basin for baptisms for this same church.

Engel Mikkelsdr, "er Niels Dorphs Hustrue" had paid for a seat or chair cushion for her use in Domkirke from 1717. At her death in 1733, she gave to the church adjacent land, to the northwest of the building. (Mandt, Eva 2005)

Mikkel's sister, Lisbeth Larsdr, who was also known as Elisabeth, survived and married Niels Christophersen Prostgaard, age 48, in 1723. The church book records her entire name to legally identify her: "Elisabeth Larsdr. Mandt Niels Christoffersøns." This endorses her identity of being the daughter of Lars and Engel Mandt, and the step-daughter of Niels Pedersen Dorph, and the wife of Niels Christophersen. Niels Christophersen was a seaman, and sailed the East Indian Ocean for 15 years from Kristiansand. He was born and baptized 1675 in Kjøbenhavn (Copenhagen), the son of Christopher Jochumsen and Johanne Nielsdr. Whether they had any children is not known, but someday this will be discovered, also. Six times Elisabeth Larsdr Christophersen, wife of Niels Christophersen, is named as a baptismal sponsor at Domkirke from 1734-1736.

In the Kristiansand Domkirke, Elisabeth Larsdr had paid "2 ort" each year from 1740 to 1751 for a seat cushion on the northwest side of Domkirke. Elisabeth died in Kristiansand, 24 September 1753, at 59. She was buried on the northwest side of the church building. (Mandt, Eva 2005)

Mikkel Larsson Mandt was living in Kristiansand from at least 1697. His father had died between 1702-1717. His step-father, Niels Pedersen Dorph, was also a gold and silversmith, and we do not know who taught Mikkel his craft. When he was 25, Mikkel was listed in 1717 as a jeweler in Kristiansand. (Borgerrulle for Kristiansund) In 1717,

Mikkel and Niels Dorph were involved in making silver hardware for caskets. They formally protested the work of Søren Andersen Messing, a competitor, who could not prove his 'training' in silver. This matter did not come to a decision, but it proves that Mikkel and his step-father worked together in Kristiansand. (Mandt, Eva 2005)

It was also about 1717 that Mikkel and Else married.

From Olav Solberg's 1989 book Engelbret Michaelsen Resen Mandt: Historisk Beskrivelse Over Øvre Tellemarken: "The name Resen (also written Reisen, Reysener, Resner, and Reisner) is Danish and comes from the name of a village by the same name (Resen) in Skodborg district, earlier called Ribe, today known as Viborg on Jylland (Jutland), the peninsula. According to the Danish Historic Encyclopedia, the name goes back to Poul Hansen who was pastor in town, and died in the year 1600. Many well-known men and women belong to this family--pastors and bishops, lawyers, artists. One of the best known was Peder Hansen Resen (1625-1688). He was president (similar to Lord Mayor in London) in Copenhagen and was well-known as the city planner. Members of this family moved to Norway around 1600 and settled in cities like Kristiansand and Flekkerø. Else Resen, who was born around 1686, belonged to this Norwegian branch of the family tree." (Solberg, O.) Else was the daughter of merchant Lars Christiansen and Gjertrud Larsdatter Resen of Fredrikshald (now Halden), although the Resen family lived mainly on the southern Norwegian coast. Else was one of thirteen children, three sons and ten daughters. Most of her siblings remained in Kristiansand. Else was named at the Oddernes church outside of Kristiansand in 1714, 1715, and 1716 as a baptismal sponsor.

## The Stories

Many, many tales exist about Mikkel and Else, making them the subjects of legend and adventure. It is remarkable these people were the main characters in legends passed down from generation to generation for over 200 hundred years. Rikard Berge in Norsk Folkekultur repeats some of the tallest tales, here retold by Olav Solberg. Solberg writes of Mikkel:

"In Stockholm he was playing cards with a couple of fellows, and since he ended up winning, they took it out on him. He killed one man in self-defense and escaped to Norway, first to Halden, later to Kragerø. Another legend says that he came from Germany, killed a man in the streets of Gøteberg, fled to Norway, got married in Gjøvik, and later came to Agder and then to Vinje. A third legend says that Mikkel Mandt was a prisoner who was exiled from Denmark and had to flee to Norway. He was a silversmith and built a cabin in Vinje.

In many of these legends, Else Resen also plays a role. One legend says that in her old age she became senile and kept repeating the following sentence--"that Christmas Eve I'll never forget!" Whether it was because Mikkel had killed someone, or that she was thinking about the war and that the house had been

burglarized, our source doesn't know.

According to another legend, Mikkel and Else came from Sweden. In one town a few men attacked him and wanted to kill him and Else. Then Mikkel killed one of them and had to run, and he took Else with him. Another legend was even more dramatic: both Mikkel and Else were arrested in Germany where he had murdered someone. The cell was on the second floor, so they cut up a beautiful red cloth into long strips and made a rope out of it, so they could climb out of the window and escape. After they reached the ground, they cut off the rope as high up as they could and brought it along with them. It remained in the family for a long time, and the family almost considered it something holy. When they escaped from the prison they put their shoes on backwards, so that when the police sent out dogs to search for them, the dogs ended up back at the prison because the footprints led them there.

Another legend says that Mikkel Mandt killed his apprentice (in the jewelry business) with a hammer and he was given the death sentence for this deed. The next thing he did was to melt down all his silver to make silver horse shoes for his horses. Then he put them on the horses backwards and fooled the people who were trying to catch him. Every time he was angry after this episode, Else would say: "Do you remember that Christmas night?" As soon as she said it, it would calm him down. Two short legends tell that the first Mandts escaped from the 30 year war and came to Kristiansand and then to Telemark, and that the Mandt family originally came from Båhuslen and escaped to Norway after it was found that they made counterfeit coins.

Another legend puts more emphasis on the so-called wealth of Mikkel Mandt. It is said that when he tore down the old barn at Tonna, the place he owned under Vinje parsonage, he found a bunch of money in a hollow log. This is said to be the source of the wealth of the Mandt family. Another legend says that Mikkel Mandt and his neighbor dug a hole on the boundary line between Tonna and Svalastoga. When Mikkel Mandt understood that they weren't far from digging up a fortune, he snuck out in the middle of the night and dug up all of it himself. So now he was super wealthy. Tradition tells that before Mikkel Mandt died, he asked to be buried in a double coffin, and his wish was granted. Later on a grave was dug up from Skafså cemetery, and they found the remains of two coffins.

It is possible that legends can be true, and one may also ask the question whether there is actually something to these legends.

Rikard Berge says that Mikkel Mandt actually did kill a man and therefore had to escape, and that he most likely came from Sweden to Norway. It is hard to say if anything else is true. But after what we already know about Mikkel Mandt's working papers in Kristiansand in 1717, and that he possibly came to Norway as a small child, he could not have come to Norway as an escapee. It is also difficult to believe that a murderer would have been able to work as a jeweler

in peace and quiet for many years, then become a master jeweler, marry and have a large family in peace. What is told in these legends must be fantasy.” (Solberg, O.)

Mikkel was also credited with making these wonderful and outrageous statements when questioned about leaving his "native land": "I stole a horse;" "My father was a Catholic priest." (Algren. O.)

## The Real Stories

Now in 2005, we know more of Mikkel's true beginnings: of his baptism in Denmark, his childhood and growth to manhood in Kristiansand, working in Skien, and eventually living in Vinje.

What was the true story of Mikkel and Else, and how they came to be in Upper Telemark? It may not be as entertaining as the old stories, but it can be pieced from historical data: Mikkel most likely learned the gold and silversmith trade from his father or his step-father. His training must have involved some professional standard. Mikkel was known as a silver and gold master craftsman. Not much of his early silver remains, although several spoons dating from 1750 have been found. A 1751 drinking cup with a handle and a lid, stamped with one of Mikkel's personal silver stamps, was identified in the 1980s. The cup was footed, adorned with leaves or feathers, resembling the rosemaling style of Telemark. The cup had been a wedding gift to Jens Evensen Kraft and Anne Marie Moss of Kongsberg. All professional craftsmen had their own stamp, and Mikkel's was an encircled "MLM".

Mikkel made silver buckles, buttons, chains and brooches, and tankards or drinking cups, the Norwegian words being *krus* or *kanne*, or the smaller *beger*. Mikkel traveled throughout Telemark, selling the jewelry he made. He also sold his work outside of the Nesland, Vinje church, similar to a current "open market," catching the eye of the worshippers returning to their farms. (Hagen, R.)

One family tradition credited Mikkel as a pioneer of filigree work, but filigree silver designs were known in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Holland several hundred years before Mikkel's time, at least back to the Viking Period. Filigree design was not very popular among the inland goldsmiths in the 1700s, but was found in the larger communities along the seacoast. However, the introduction of filigree silver work into the folk costume jewelry used in Upper Telemark and from there to Setesdal is credited to Mikkel and another goldsmith, Jens Erland. (Fossberg, J.).

Mikkel held a title of underofficer in the 1st Western Regiment, although there is no proof he participated in any military efforts, and may have obtained this title for business reasons. Silversmithing was highly regulated by guild laws from 1314, and until 1839. It was an urban craft, and rural work was permitted only by paying a duty to the nearest town, or by special privilege, such as granted to soldiers or officers.

Mikkel was *lensmann* (civic official, not literally a mayor, but more like a sheriff;

appointed by authorities) in Vinje, and a *Klokker* (sexton) in the Vinje parish. Else was said to be a pretty woman with a fiery temper, who could be both droll and sarcastic. She was an able and intelligent woman. (Algren, O.)

The demand for jewelers and watchmakers in the small Norwegian coastal towns was not great, and Mikkel and Else did not stay in Kristiansand. "Their children were born on the move. Lars Laurentius was baptised in 1718, Gjertrud Maria most likely in 1719, Engelbret in Brevik in 1722, Peter Kristian in Gjerpen in 1724, Johanne Elisabet in Solum in 1726. The last three of the eight children, Ole (1728), Rasmus (1731), and Lars (1733) were born in the same place, after Else Resen and Michel Mandt had settled down. They had left the coast and settled in Vinje in Upper Telemark." (Solberg, O.) Some accounts place another son Knut, in 1727, but the Vinje *kyrkebok* records Mikkel as a witness at the baptism of Knut, son of Knut Bringswærd, in 1727. This Knut was not a son of Mikkel L. Mandt and Else Larsdatter Resen Mandt. (Mandt, K.O.)

Mikkel was a watchmaker and silversmith in Skien for a few years. (Schilbred) By 1728, the family had moved to Skjelvik, a place near Vinjevatnet, north of Særensgrønd in Telemark, later moving to a small farm, Tonna, next to the Nesland church in Vinje. He built a workshop and dug a pond, and had the first geese to be seen in Telemark. He taught his sons the craft of silversmithing, and they were known for their technical ability and artistic creativity.

Mikkel died peacefully at Nedre Åmli (Nigard), the home of his son, Petter Kristian, when he was 74 years old. He was buried in the Skafså churchyard, 4 August 1766. Else died at the age of 99, on 19 March 1785. She was buried in the Mo churchyard, 28 March 1785. Before her death, Else had been in her second childhood for some time, and she was being taken care of by her family. Olav and Rasmus both lived in Mo parish at the time, and possibly she was on a Felland farm of Olav's when she died. (Mandt, K.O.) Regardless of the wishful tales of treasures, there is no record of Mikkel leaving any estate whatsoever. What he did leave behind was a family of inventive, artistic, and ambitious heirs.

## The Children

Their first child, Lars Laurentius Mikkelsson Mandt, was born 1718. The family was most likely living in Kristiansand at this time. Lars died at the age of 14, and was the first Mandt buried in Vinje parish (Nesland) in 1732. (Mandt, O.L.)

Gjertrud Marie Mikkelsdatter Mandt was born in 1719, probably in Kristiansand. She was recorded as being a witness or godmother at baptisms in Vinje in the years 1739, 1746, 1748, and 1752. In 1753 at 34 years of age, she married Frantz Johannesen Cudrio (1703-1758), a widowed goldsmith in the seacoast town of Kragerø. Gjertrud Marie died giving birth to a daughter, Anna Catrine Sparre. Gjertrud was buried in Kragerø, 31 March 1757. Baby Anna Catrine was baptized 1 April 1757. Frantz himself lived only one year more, and so little Anna then lived with her mother's family until

her own death, just before her third birthday. The Cudrio property was transferred to Mikkel Mandt, then to Engelbret Resen Mandt as Anna Catrine's legal guardian on 14 December 1761. (Mandt, K.O.)

Engelbret Resen Mikkelsso Mandt was one of the most intriguing members of the family. Engelbret's true story far surpasses the legends we always accepted as fact. Let me set the stage: he was born in 1722 and was baptized in Brevik. Engelbret was raised as a farmer but also became an accomplished silver and gold craftsman. He was a well-read and learned man, although without formal education. Engelbret traveled in Norway and Europe buying minerals and marketing his wares. He spoke German, Dutch, and English besides Norwegian, and could read English, German, and Norwegian. He had black hair, black eyes, and often wore a brown wig. (Mandt, O.L.) He was an apprentice goldsmith in Kragerø to Ole Olsen, the most dominating jeweler in Kragerø at the time. After Ole Olsen died, Engelbret married Ole's widow Anna Catharina, taking over the clients, the business, and the home of his former teacher and partner, a common practice of those days. Anna Catharina was nineteen years older than Engelbret's twenty-two years, and this was her third marriage. She had a son, Bendix Jahn, from her first marriage, a daughter, Maren Olesdatter, from her second, but she and Engelbret were childless.

Engelbret served his community of Kragerø during the 1740s and 1750s: he was a tax appraiser in 1748; and in 1749, he and his brother-in-law Frantz Cudrio were jury members. Engelbret was a frequent legal witness in church affairs and important civil events. Ambros Sollid wrote in Telemark Landsbruksselskap (Telemark Agriculture) 1777-1877, "The first time we hear of potato growing in Telemark is in 1758 by Ingebrigt Resen in Mo." (Sollid, A.) This is confirmed by Professor S. Hasund in an article in "Norsk Hydro", No. 5, 1946. It cannot be proved that he introduced potatoes to Norway, as it was written earlier, but it is evident that he was the one to first introduce them to Upper Telemark.

Our family has always accepted that while on a marketing trip, ca. 1764-68 to Copenhagen, and perhaps England and Germany, he was robbed and killed. Engelbret's brothers, Olav and Rasmus, tried to discover what had become of him, placing ads in European newspapers with his description. Two of Olav's sons, Mikkel and Tarjei, traveled to England to claim their uncle's property from the authorities. They were shown a grave that could have been his but were not allowed to claim possessions.

Olav Solberg proved in 1989 that Engelbret did not die after an attack somewhere in Europe, but lived for nearly twenty more years. He died in 1781 and is buried in the Nikolaj church cemetery, in Copenhagen. This church was destroyed by fire in 1795, but the records are intact. He was buried 11 June 1781; the 185th body buried that year. (Nikolaj parish)

During the years of Engelbret's disappearance, from 1764 and until his death, he used the name Engelbret Michaelsen and claimed to be almost six years younger. He lived most of these years in Copenhagen. He was a merchant and legal distiller of

spirits. He became a citizen of Copenhagen and a member of the distiller's guild. He owned property, and although he became engaged not long before his death, he did not marry.

He never contacted his family or attempted to claim money or property in Norway, even after the death of Anna Catharina. By 1777, he had written a manuscript titled Historisk Beskrivelse Over Øvre Telemarken (Historic Description of Upper Telemark), and this work was given to Fredrik, the Danish crown prince, (1753-1805). The manuscript today is in the Royal Copenhagen Library in good condition after 200 years, frequently read and referred to for historical, mythological, and topographical information on Upper Telemark.

This family owes so much to Olav Solberg for his bringing to light the true story of Engelbret. We not only have the truth, which is better than fiction, but Engelbret's own words to read and enjoy. Engelbret wrote with great charm and detail about Upper Telemark. He must have loved its valleys, streams, and peaks. We are the heirs to this unique treasure!

Petter Kristian Mikkelsen Mandt (Peter Christian) was born 1724, and was baptised July 9, 1724 in Gjerpen church near Skien. He married Åse Tarjeisdatter Loftsgarden, Byrte, born 1731. The marriage date is unavailable, as there was no church register kept between 1748 and 1766, but they must have married before 1752. He was a trained silversmith and a farmer. He bought one of the Håtveit farms in Mo about 1750 and lived there until about 1752 when he bought Floten in Mo. He traded Floten for one of the Dalen farms in Eidsborg. In 1761, Petter traded the Dalen farm for Førstøyl in Høydalsmo. He lived there until 1762, when he returned to Romdal in Eidsborg. In only one year he traded for Nedre Åmli (Nigard) in Skafså, and that was where he lived the remainder of his life. (Mandt, K.O.)

Petter Kristian and Åse had nine children. He was *lensmann* of Fyresdal 1777-1779, and documented much of the history of that time. He owned the only sawmill in West Telemark by royal privilege, and owned extensive forest lands. He farmed and dealt in real estate, buying and selling property. His penmanship was clear, and Petter Kristian prepared documents locally and in neighboring areas. (Mandt, O.L.) Petter Kristian died in 1782, when he was only 59, and was buried in Skafså churchyard.

Petter Kristian, and his connection to Eidsborg stave *kirke* were an important part of our family history. This stave church was built about 1250. After the Reformation in 1546, the Crown confiscated everything belonging to the old Catholic church. According to Royal decree in 1721, the churches in Norway were sold to private people. Eidsborg church was then sold to a high-ranking officer. When this officer died, Petter Kristian together with other members of the local congregation purchased the church at a public auction in 1759, and later turned it back to the people. (Mandt, K.O.) His great grandson, Mikkelsen Pettersson Mandt, painted the altar nearly 100 years later. The Eidsborg church contained a carved wooden image of St. Nicolaus of Bari, the patron saint of this church, dating from the 11th century. In earlier times, on St. John's Day,

parishioners carried St. Nicolaus down the hill to a little lake, where they bathed him to free them of their sins and to insure good crops. By the mid-1800s the custom was abandoned, and Petter Mikkelsson Mandt, *lensmann* and poet, grandson of Petter Kristian, carried the carved image to Oslo, presenting it to the Oslo University Collection of Antiquities in 1850, where it is today. Today a replica rests in a corner of the church.

Johanne Elisabet Mikkelsdatter Mandt (1726-1810), was baptised in Solum, near Skien. She married Vrål Trondsson Førstøyl of Høydalsmo in 1748 (not the same Førstøyl farm as Petter Kristian had owned), and had six children and many descendants. I have found no information about Johanne, other than the factual data of her children and grandchildren. She was living on the Noraberg farm in Høydalsmo when she died, and was buried 1 January 1811 in Høydalsmo. Vrål had died in 1785.

Olav Mikkelsson Mandt (1728-1814) was born at Skjelvik, Vinje. He married Juri Tarjeisdatter Reindal (1738-1822), in 1756. They had eleven children, with only nine surviving past infancy. Olav was also a gold and silver smith, known for his silverware. He carried his wares in a wooden box on his back. This box had been kept at Blikom, but its existence today is uncertain. Olav served as a corporal and a sergeant in the military, 1748-1752. Olav purchased several large and successful farms in Skafså parish (Eikland, Gåstjønn, and others).

The story of how he obtained Eikland in 1785, a particularly fine place he had long admired is told by Olav L. Mandt in 1914: “the owners of a saw mill offered 1,000 *rigsdalars* to anyone who could break a log jam. Olav accepted the challenge. He waited for the first flood; then with a crew of woodsmen felled pines on both banks of the river, piling trees and limbs into the water above the jam. The rushing stream carried them down into the obstruction, backing up water until it broke through, taking the logs downstream. In one day Olav earned 1,000 *rigsdalers* and bought Eikland for 900!” (Mandt, O.L.) We must amend this story a bit: 1,000 *rigsdalers* was not enough. Olav bought Eikland for 2590 *rigsdalers*. (Mandt, K.O.)

Olav and Juri lived first at Reine, in Mo parish, and in 1756 moved to Nord-Felland, a place inherited by Juri. He also purchased Rofshus, Mo, in 1769 for 700 *rigsdalers*. In 1790, he traded a part of Nord-Felland and 1399 *rigsdalers* for Gåstjønn, with the farms Berge, Nesmork and Mule, all in Skafså. Olav’s oldest son Mikkell took over Eikland, but died twelve years before his father. Mikkell’s widow remarried, and her new husband, Ole Blom, ran the farm for some years. Tjøstov took over Olav’s other farm, Rofshus in Mo. Olav’s son Tarjei took over the Gåstjønn farm. Olav died at Eikland at 86, and was followed nine years later by Juri, 85 years old. They were buried in Skafså churchyard.

Olav L. Mandt told this true story of one of Olav and Juri’s descendants in 1914, and I would like to repeat it: Lars Olavsson Blikom, grandson of Olav and Juri was trained as a youth by his father to be a silversmith. He had a great talent, and is perhaps recognized as the best silversmith in the family. It was illegal to make something from

silver without a special license from the authorities. It was difficult to obtain this license.

In 1841, there was a trial of seventeen men from Mo and Skafså, who were accused of illegal silver work. Among them was Lars Blikom, and also the majority of the others were either members of the family or in some way connected to the family. Four of them were fined 10 *Speciedaler* each. The remaining 13 had to serve five days on bread and water. Imprisonment of short duration was usually served in the local jail. The local jail was supervised by the *lensmann*. The *lensmann* was cousin Petter Mikkelsøn Mandt, in Dalen. Olav S. Mandt, a grandson of Rasmus Mikkelsøn, also was sentenced at this time. Lars and Ole came with big baskets filled with *lefse*, *gammeost* (very aged cheese), *spekekjøtt* (smoked meat), *rakørret*, and other delicacies. Petter furnished the drink. So they and their captors lived well for the five days. Lars did obtain his license, and he received praise and recognition for his fine craftsmanship throughout his career. He was well respected, and was an astute businessman, buying and selling boats and lumber.

Rasmus Mikkelsøn Mandt (1731-1813) was born at Skjelvik, Vinje. He married twice, first to Tårånn Aslaksdatter Midjås, but she died without children. By 1760, he had married Gunhild Olavsdaughter, Håtveit (1741-1813). They had twelve children. (Family tradition tells us the story that Rasmus purchased Honstøylheii in Mo by exchanging bridal jewelry he had made for the property, but this cannot be proven, as the farm location cannot be found, or the name was changed long, long ago.) (Mandt, K.O.) Rasmus was noted for his abilities of writing, drawing, and painting. He was talented with gold and silver, and he traded his work successfully at a very young age throughout Telemark. He worked hard all his life and was an excellent farmer. He lived on Nedrebø and Midjås farms in Mo. On Midjås he built about 1737 yards of stone fences, dug 1611 yards of ditches for drainage, and removed 6000 loads of rocks from the fields with the help of servants. This was accomplished in two years, and was he awarded the gold medal from the "Dansk Landhusholdningsselskab" (Danish Agricultural Society), the highest award this institution could give. (Berge, R.)

Rasmus was a good forester and a brilliant goldsmith: "I have sold logs for 3000 out of the Midjås forests, but what is that (compared) to the hammer, the hammer! (ie. the silver work) It was hard to work in the forest during the day and do silver work in the nights." As an old man he one day took part in building a house. Unfortunately he fell down and was so badly hurt that he was bedridden until he died. At the end of his life he was almost deaf. He could only understand what Gunhild whispered in his ear. When she died, no one could understand him. He had nothing to live for any longer, and he died the day after Gunhild." (Rikard Berge: Bygdedikting fraa Telemark VI. Petter Mandt og andre lårdølar). Rasmus died a well-to-do man. Rasmus and Gunhild were living on Nedrebø with their son Knut when they died, and they were buried in Mo churchyard.

Rasmus' oldest son Olav Rasmusson was *lensmann* in Mo until his death. Olav

Rasmusson and his wife Sigrid are pictured in Bendik Tamalsen's book Fyresdahl. A daughter, Gjertrud Rasmusdatter, married Talleiv Huvestad, a member of the Storting and a signer of the 1814 declaration of Norwegian independence. (Mandt, O.L.)

Mikkel and Else's youngest child, Lars Mikkelsson Mandt, was born 1733 at Tonna, Vinje. He died as an infant and was buried at the Nesland church in 1733 or 1734.

## Our Legacy

You may have noticed that very little information is available about the women of these generations. This was the norm prior to 1900. The Mandt women, whether born of this family, or married into it, have had a huge impact. Within the first four generations following Mikkel and Else, many of these women gave birth to 8-15 children, although the mortality rate for infants was high through the 1800s. In some cases that meant that 20-30 years were the childbearing years for a woman! Life in rural Norway and the frontiers of North America did not limit a woman's work only to child bearing. The hardships and joys of their lives we can only imagine! Their experiences, determination, courage, talents, and strength are one legacy we proudly claim.

Among the notable artists, educators, politicians, writers, pastors, and civic leaders descended from the Mandt family are Anne Grimdalen (sculptress), Dyre Vaa (sculptor), his sister Aslaug Vaa (poet), Dyre's son Tor Vaa (sculptor), Eivind Tveiten (silversmith), Lars Olavson Blikom (silversmith), brothers Bjørn and Olav Kleppo (knife makers), Halvor Nordbø (writer, professor), Mikkel P. Mandt (artist), Vetle Vislie (journalist, editor, writer), Gunnar Utsond (sculptor and educator), Gisle Straume (actor at Det Norske Teatret and Nationaltheatret, manager Rogaland Teater, Stavanger 1955-58, and Den Nationale Scene, Bergen 1963-67). Mikkel Lauritzson and many of his descendants served as *lensmann* in Telemark parishes. The Lårdal Museum, Eidsborg, displays silver done by Mikkel, his sons, many talented descendants, and Frantz Cudrio.

Mandt emigrants continued to display talents in North America: Rasmus Olsen Reine wrote a book of poems, making it the first book ever published by a Norwegian in America. T.G. Mandt designed the Mandt Wagon of Stoughton, Wisconsin, and his father and brothers were inventors, furniture makers, and intriguing men; the Rev. Carl Schevenius of Minnesota; Bob Bergland, former US Secretary of Agriculture; Gunnar Felland, one of the founders of St. Olaf College, are but a few of the many, each deserving a biography. Currently we have Mandt cousins who hold places of respect in the political, scientific, literary, artistic and educational fields.

We are the inheritors of an intriguing legacy, a legacy that comes from Mikkel and Else, and from those resilient Telemark families that their sons and daughters joined.

Mange tusen takk for letting me share our history with you!

## Comments

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There is no way to properly thank our Norwegian cousins for their time, efforts, encouragement, and patience in this writing of the Mandt story. We are all indebted to Kristoffer and Eva Mandt, who have spent years searching in Europe for provable data on Mikkel's ancestors. They worked tirelessly from parish and civil (probates, tax, land, etc) microfilms, books, family bibles and records, early Telemark history. They are responsible for all new discoveries of Mikkel and his primary family since the mid 1970s, essentially carrying on the work of Kristoffer's father, Olav L Mandt, 1858-1939. Kristoffer and Eva collaborated with other historical authors, and have written many articles and books themselves, and contributed heavily to the Digital Arkiv database.

I believe this information to be accurate AT THIS TIME IN HISTORY AND RESEARCH, and look forward anxiously for more facts to come to light in our future. We must continue to share new discoveries with each other! Just as this is updated in 2005, I will continue to rewrite this as new data is found and proven.

To read more fully about each ancestor, and the many generations that follow, read these works, remembering that some of these earliest writings and translations we now know to be historically incorrect. Please note that I have mainly focused on the first two generations, but that those that follow are just as intriguing, and deserve your time and study. With the help of many of our Telemark cousins, I have written articles and brief biographies of some of those listed above, both Norsk and US descendants. Contact me for copies.

In addition to the works cited below, please study the bygdeboks for Kviteseid, Vinje, and Nissedal parishes. For information on our emigrant families when first in North America, please read the church, county and state records and histories of Canada, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North and South Dakota. The US and state census, immigration, and naturalization records also provide important information. More and more stories are becoming available as individual families compile their stories and share them. One of the most prolific writers of pioneer stories was Orabel Thortvedt (born 1896), who captured her memories as a child pioneer in words and drawings.

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