

AUNTIE ANNA'S SUITCASE

Auntie Anna wasn't just another aunt, she was my mother's older sister who was like a grandmother to me. My real grandmother died when I was only four. Anna immigrated from Lom, Gudbrandsdal, Norway in 1883 to Eau Claire, WI when just a few months old. She grew up on a farm in SE Dunn County, WI with five siblings, became a rural school teacher, graduated from Stout Institute (UW Stout University), taught home economics, and had a passion for family history and genealogy.



When she died in 1957 my mother became the executor of her estate, parceling out the things of value to family members. I still wonder who got the candy dish that was filled every time we visited, but one of the things that came to our home was Anna's suitcase. It is a sturdy brown suitcase filled with papers. There are working papers and paper scrolls over six feet long filled with her recollections of the family tree going back several generations and broadening out to many cousins in these generations. And all this without a bygdebøk! The Skjåk Ættebøk and recent Lom bygdebøker helped fill in names and answered questions but the foundation of the family tree was in the suitcase. What a great find!

Among the papers was a notebook with the minutes and newspaper clippings of Bræk family reunions from 1931-1951. Precious nuggets of family history are recorded in these minutes. It is clear that they had a really good time, The reunions began in 1923 and continue to this day, that's 88 years.

Family members who attended St. Olaf College found Auntie Anna very willing to help them complete their Norwegian family history class project too!. Hand written notes of the materials she shared with them were found among her papers documenting biographies of several members in the family.

There were other things, 100 year old letters from Norway, a couple of diaries, and a Norwegian New Testament Bible. There even is evidence that she may have been a Gudbrandsdalslaget member or at least a stevne attendee as the suitcase contains *Gudbrandsdalslaget Aarbog No. 3 og 4 and 11 og 12*, and a copy of the *Norse-American Centennial* program from 1925.

Thinking back, it would have been nice to have the candy dish, but in reality, for a niece with a similar passion for family history and genealogy, Auntie Anna's suitcase is a whole lot sweeter.