



2017 TFG
Conference

Timber Framed Building in Norway: History, Usage, & Tradition

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Hordaland, Norway

People have lived in Norway in for about 11,000 years. Agriculture began in the late Stone Age, approximately 4000 years ago, and it is assumed that the first wooden buildings were built at this time. The oldest archaeological evidence of wooden buildings are posts from longhouses from about 1800 BC. Stav churches dating to the early 1100s are the oldest existing timber framed structures in Norway. The oldest intact non-ecclesiastical post building is the Finnesloftet in Voss from 1295.

Norway's timber framed barn tradition shares a common heritage with the rest of Europe. The earliest existing barns from 1500-1650 share similar features: three bays, passage through the middle bay, and posts sitting directly on stone rather than a sill. Many of the barns have symbols carved into the posts. It is believed these were meant to protect from witches and other imagined evil. These early barns were simply designed for easy access with crops and space for threshing and storage of grain and hay. By 1800 barns took on more uses and the "unit barn" or all-under-one-roof barn developed. Barn development continued when the first agronomist began his career in 1860.

Twenty distinct timber frame styles are found in Norway. These developed from a combination of local innovation, regional conditions and materials, and outside contact, as well as changes in agricultural practices. A sampling of these styles will be shown at the end of the presentation as well as some Icelandic frames that exhibit early Norwegian construction techniques used well into the 20th century.

About the Speaker

Trond Oalann

Trond Oalaan hails from a family of carpenters going back many generations. He began his career learning from his grandfather, and went on to do restoration carpentry at Bryggen, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Bergen. In 2003, he received a three-year fellowship from the Norwegian Crafts Institute to study stav construction techniques from the "old guys" and others carrying on the traditional knowledge. Mr. Oalann currently works for the Hordaland council as the Craftsman/Carpentry Consultant on restoring buildings, teaching courses on restoration carpentry, and sleuthing out old buildings for historical designation.

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