

# The Establishment of Tronruds in the United States

Dale. E. Tronrud

1335 Brickley Rd  
Eugene, OR 97401

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The arrival of the Tronrud family in the United States is an event shrouded in mystery. By the time my father's generation starting looking into family history, those people who made the journey were long dead. He (Edwin Tronrud) talked to many people to learn their recollections and what he learned has become the standard version of the story, which has been repeated in books like Herman Tronrud's book *I've Always been Lucky*. Unfortunately he didn't write down details of who gave which piece of information so it is difficult to verify the details of the account he reconstructed.

I've been looking into this matter and find that many of the details of the standard story are not consistent with the records I've seen. While I've not been able to find any direct immigration records, I have gleaned information from various censuses, and combined that with information other people have collected from sources in Norway. I've decided the best way to present this story is to tell it, and then later present the sources that support this version. I'm sure there are errors in my version, since some records are inconsistent and I would really like to see direct records from the journey.

But first, some background details.

# 1 On Names in Nineteenth Century Norway

At the time of these events people in rural Norway didn't use the same system of names as most of Europe and the United States. They did not use a "family" name. Each person had a personal name (a "first" name), a specification of the person's father's personal name, and the name of the farm they lived on. The center of this story, and an ancestor of nearly all Tronruds in the United States today, was named Anders Christianson Heieren. His personal name was Anders, his father's name was Christian, and he grew up on the farm Heieren.

Another interesting aspects of the names used by the Tronruds born in Norway is their intense reuse of names. One really has to add the name of the father to keep distinguish between the various Andrews, Antons, Marys, and others. This practice appears to have died out quickly in the Wisconsin branch of the Tronruds, but the Montana branch has adopted the practice of naming sons after fathers and having a Junior and Senior.

## 2 Norwegian Events

I'll start with Christian Syversen Heieren. This fellow owned the farm Heieren which was located in the area of a small town of Honefoss near Modem, west of Oslo.

His first son was born in 1816 and named Syver Christiansen Heieren and his second son was born in March of 1818 and named Anders Christiansen Heieren. Anders status as second son was his problem. Syver would inherit Heieren and Anders needed a home.

On November 25, 1842 Anders married Ingeborg Andersdatter and a couple years later they purchased Tronerud and became Tronerud. According the 1865 Norwegian census their family consisted of nine kids – seven sons and two daughters.

Census Birth Year	Norwegian Name	US Name	Known Birthday
1843	Christian	Christ	December 8, 1842
1845	Andreas	Andrew	February 24, 1846
1847	Petter		
1850	Ole		
1852	Thorvald	Tom	1853
1855	Edvard	Edward	October 1856
1857	Anton	Anton/Tony	1858
1859	Karine		
1860	Maren		

("Census birth years" are often off by one year in either direction. A census usually has the age of a person and the calculation of their birth year differs if their birthday occurred before the day of the census or after.)

There are two points to note about this list. First, Christ was born 13 days after his parents' wedding day. Either Scandinavians were quite liberal at the time, or these dates are not entirely reliable. Please remember that most of these dates come from recollections recorded many years after the fact. I don't have other records for the remaining four children. In fact, I'd not heard of these people before. For some reason they do not appear in the recollections of anyone in the US.

There are two daughters of Anders and Ingebor who are remembered, Clara and Caroline. I can't explain why they are not listed in 1865 census. The children listed come in a regular spacing of about two years, leaving no room for kids to have been born and moved away before the census. Of course, Clara and Caroline have been big mysteries to everyone and I have seen no record of their existence in the US, only stories about them. It's possible that their memory does not reflect blood relatives, but close friends of the family that died long before the birth of those people who passed the stories down to us.

Christ married Anna Jonsdatter Støvern in 1868 and I'm unaware of any other marriages in this group while they were still in Norway. The 1865 census shows Anna's family as well.

<u>Census Birth Year</u>	<u>Norwegian Name</u>
1818	John Olsen
1821	Kirsti Pedersdatter
1847	Ole Johnsen
1849	Anne Johnsdatter
1856	Petter Johnsen
1859	Karen Johnsdatter
1862	Johnas Johnsen
1787	Kirsti Torstinsdatter

Kirsti Torstinsdatter appears to be the mother of either John or his wife Kirsti Pedersdatter. At the time of the census, Ole Johnsen was the head of the household and John was his helper – Pretty good for an 18 year old.

In the US I’ve always seen the name as “Stovern” but the proper name of the farm in Norway is “Rolfestøvern”. You have to get the spelling right to find records in Norway.

The Troneruds eventually decided to move to America. We do not have any record of why they made this decision, but there are a number of reasonable possibilities. First, there were enormous opportunities in America and many Norwegians at that time were moving to take advantage of them. Second, the Anders children had the same problem Anders had when he was starting out: Only one son could inherit Tronerud, and there were now seven.

The third possibility is a story related by Edwin Tronrud, who probably heard it from Inez (Kraemer) Tronrud who lived for quite a few years with her father-in-law, Andrew Tronrud, in Montana. Noway was a part of Sweden in the 1800’s and Sweden drafted young men into their army. Life was not good for Norwegians in the Swedish army, so this family with seven sons decided to leave the country rather than serve.

### 3 Moving to America

This period of the family’s history is the most confusing. None of the dates given by the available sources seem to agree with each other, and I know of no one who has found any primary records from this time. One of the best sources is the 1900 census in which people were asked what year they came to the US.

Andrew was the first to go, leaving Norway in 1869. Christ and Anna left on July 23, 1870. Anders left in 1872, and Edward left in 1880. There is

a report that Petter left at the same time as Christ. Tom and Anton shared Andrew's interest in mining and may have come early with him. I have no idea what happened to the others, or why Petter didn't end up in Wisconsin with Christ and Anna.

(Around 1885 Anna's brother Johnas came to the US and bought a farm about a mile and a half upstream from Christ and Anna's farm on Vance Creek. John Stovern is the root ancestor of the Stoverns in the area.)

What these people did in their early years in the US is unknown. Hard facts show that Menomonie, Wisconsin was an important staging ground for the family. Everyone we know spent time there in the 1870's. Unfortunately the courthouse later burned down and all government records were destroyed.

The 1880 census provides a great deal of information about the family at this time. It shows that Andrew was living with Tom in Butte City, Montana both working as miners. Edward was living in Menomonie along with his mother Ingebor, and working as a bartender.

Christ and Anna were living in the Vance Creek valley in rural Barron County. With them was the beginning of their family, Andrew, Caroline, John and Inga. Christ's father, Anders was also living there. Up to this time, Christ's family was living in a small log cabin, but space was getting tight. In 1880 he built the large log house that he lived in for the rest of his life. My father believed that Anders was staying there to help build that house. It stood for a hundred years, but was only occupied until 1940. After that it was called the "haunted house".

Also staying with Christ was a 20 year old woman named Otelia Heieren. I believe this was Edward's fiance, staying 30 miles away for propriety's sake.

I have no idea where Petter, Ole, Marian, or Karin were in 1880. I'm also missing data on Anton but he was probably out mining somewhere in the west.

In October 1880 Edward married someone named Otelia and moved to a farm next to Christ's farm in Vance Creek. Anders and Ingebor lived with his family until their deaths in 1906 and 1890, respectively.

On May 15th, 1881 Andrew married Mary Sletten. They came all the way to Menomonie to get married, and then returned to Butte, Montana.

I'm not aware that Tom or Anton ever married. They stayed in the mining industry and tended to move with the latest "rush".

## 4 The Wisconsin Tronruds

In all later years there has been the “Wisconsin Tronruds” and the “Montana Tronruds”. Every Wisconsin Tronrud I know of is a descendant of Christ and Anna Tronrud. Those two were prodigious at producing children, with four sons and four daughters that lived to adulthood, and a number of children who died young and are hard to identify today. The children who lived were Andrew, Caroline Strand, John, Inga Landskov, Ole, Peter, Mary Amundson, and Alma Erickson/Anderson/Diffendaffer/Peters. Many of these children lived their lives very close to the Vance Creek area.

## 5 The Montana Tronruds

Andrew and Mary founded the Montana Tronruds. They had five sons and four daughters. After their first years of marriage in Butte, they bought a ranch near Melville, Montana a hundred miles or so north of Big Timber. While ranch life dominated the lives of Mary and the children, Andrew still loved the mining life. When times on the ranch were slow he would travel north to work in the town of Castle which was near a number of silver and lead mines.

Their children were Adolph, Caroline Schallock, Amelia Bennett, Clara Monroe, Anton, Petra Martin, George, Morris, and Victor.

## 6 The Other Wisconsin Tronruds

Edward and Otelia also settled in Vance Creek, but they appear to have left no descendants. This is not true. They had seven children, but only one, Almer Carl Tronrud, was male and he never married. All of the members of this branch of the Tronrud clan have family names other than Tronrud. The names of the daughters were Minnie, Thilda, Sofie, Anne, Ovidia, and Nettie.

I think it must have been hard running a Wisconsin farm at the end of the nineteenth century with only one son. The 1900 census is interesting because Minnie Tronrud shows up twice. She is listed on the farm in Vance Creek, but there is another Minnie Tronrud of the same age working in St. Paul, Minnesota. Seventeen years old seems young to be on your own in the big city in 1900. The 1905 Minnesota census shows that the third sister, Sophie,

followed her sister. She was 15 years old, but was living in Minneapolis and working as a stenographer.

These girls found husbands, changed their names, and can no longer be recognized. My best lead is that Nettie married a Peterson and lived in Clear Lake until her death in 1976.

Sometime around 1920 Edward, Otelia, and Almer left their Vance Creek farm and moved to Amery, Wisconsin. Edward and Otelia died in 1935 and Almer died in 1973. They are buried next to each other in the Amery Cemetery.

## 7 Resources

The Norwegian Historical Data Centre had a website that allows you to search the 1865 and 1900 Norwegian censuses at <http://www.rhd.uit.no/indexeng.html>. The record for the Anders Christiansen Tronerud family can be found at

[http://www.rhd.uit.no/folketellinger/ftliste\\_e.aspx?ft=1865&knr=0613&kenr=009&bnr=0106&lnr=000](http://www.rhd.uit.no/folketellinger/ftliste_e.aspx?ft=1865&knr=0613&kenr=009&bnr=0106&lnr=000)

The trick to finding the Norwegian census record for Anna Stovern is adding the prefix “Ralfe” to “Stovern” and getting the “ø” in the name. The John Olsen Rolfestøvern family can be found at

[http://www.rhd.uit.no/folketellinger/ftliste\\_e.aspx?ft=1865&knr=0613&kenr=009&bnr=0091&lnr=000](http://www.rhd.uit.no/folketellinger/ftliste_e.aspx?ft=1865&knr=0613&kenr=009&bnr=0091&lnr=000)

The Syver Christiansen Heieren family can be found at

[http://www.rhd.uit.no/folketellinger/ftliste\\_e.aspx?ft=1865&knr=0613&kenr=008&bnr=0124&lnr=000](http://www.rhd.uit.no/folketellinger/ftliste_e.aspx?ft=1865&knr=0613&kenr=008&bnr=0124&lnr=000)

For US history, my father Edwin Tronrud wrote up the stories he learned from talking to many people, as well as an interesting description of his time in the Army Air Corps during WWII. This book was Xeroxed and distributed to close family members but never formally published. For those interested, I can provide a copy of that I have been adding annotations to.

My uncle Herman Tronrud’s book *I’ve always been Lucky* contains a great many recollections of this grandson of Christ and Anna. My aunt Alice Newville wrote a book named *The Twentieth Century – My Part* but she focuses mostly on her life and not these earlier events.

A huge amount of information about the Montana Tronruds was collected by Mary Edythe Tronrud McCleerey (granddaughter of Andrew and Mary Tronrud) and published in *Tronruds of Montana*.

## 8 Acknowledgements

This tale is based on the work of many people. My father, Edwin Tronrud, did a great deal of work talking to as many relatives as he could in the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's. His writings are the best records of those recollections. I have also talked with my uncle, Herman Tronrud, whose memories were invaluable. I have supplemented this information with secondary sources, such as census records, obituaries, and tombstones. My wife Evelyn has been a great help in finding records on the Internet. Most of these records were found using Ancestry.com.