



Kathrine Boeck 3rd from the left.

LOSBY GODS

— A STATELY HISTORY

There are traces of human presence in Losbydalen Valley dating back to the Stone Age. It was, however, the introduction of the sawmill that heralded Losby's golden age.

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Legend has it that Hyme, the ancestor of the Jotun giants, resided in Losby Woods. There is no evidence to support this, of course, but Losby region was in fact named in the Prose Edda literary works. The name Elivagar recurs frequently. A flint axe from the Stone Age, found in Losby Woods, is decidedly the oldest evidence of human presence in the area.

We also know that the two “Mork” farms were first cleared during the Viking Age. The three farms, Losby, Vestmork and Østmork were among the few farms that survived the Black Death and continued to thrive. Each of the three farms started its own sawmill in the 16th century, in addition to gristmills.

Losby and Vestmork had the same line of ownership as early as 1660. The name Losby originates from the name Loptr, meaning Loptr’s farm. One of the major owners was Arnt Tostensøn, son of Tosten Arnesøn, who in 1647 presented the altarpiece to what is now Lørenskog Church. Another prominent farm owner in Losby’s line of ownership was Peder Cudrio. In the mid-18th century, he and his wife, Karen Cudrio, owned 15,000 hectares of forest. Peder Cudrio died young, and his wife, Karen Cudrio ran the Losby farm on her own for 36 years.

The sawmill era at Losby Gods was long and eventful, with numerous owners and turbulent periods including everything from bankruptcy to enormous wealth.

THE MEYER FAMILY ASSUMES LOSBYDALEN

Jacob Meyer and Isach Muus purchased the property together in 1830. From 1840, the property was run solely by Jacob Meyer. Had Losby Farm not been a small part of the property complex before, it certainly became so, since Meyer purchased additional areas including Nordby, Nes, Vestby, Ryen and Søndre Skjetten. Altogether, he owned 16 sawmills in Strømmen.

This led to a high demand for plank transport. Around 1800 horses were used daily to transport planks from Strømmen to a timber yard in Grønland. At this time, the timber industry in Losby and surrounding areas was at its peak.

Jacob Meyer was a hard worker and was considered the major timber operator and lumber exporter in the country. He lived in the city, but used Losby as his summer home.

BUILDING THE MANOR HOUSE

After a few years as forest owners, the Meyer family decided they wanted a more representative residence in which to host prominent guests

who travelled the long route to Losby Woods. In 1850, the family built an 800 square meter hunting lodge, a magnificent piece of Swiss chalet style architecture. The house was never intended as a home, but rather as a place to celebrate holidays, host splendid parties and enjoy lavish banquets after hunting in Losby Woods.

Laasby Compagni, established by Jacob Meyer’s son, Thorvald Meyer, along with his brothers-in-law Thomas Heftye and Thomas Sewell, purchased Losby, Vestmork, Djupdalen, Rælingskogene, Skullerud Woods, Nes, Jarstangen and Østmork in 1856. The three young men who now owned the house hosted numerous parties and celebrations.

Thorvald Meyer’s brother, Lorentz Meyer, then took over the estate and made frequent use of the residence. His two daughters, Sophie Meyer and Thea Marie Meyer inherited the manor. Sophie Meyer married forensic physician, Dr. Hakon Cæsar Boeck, and it was their only son, Lorentz Meyer Boeck, who inherited Losby in 1893. In this way, the ownership was passed on from the Meyer family to the Boeck family.

THE FIRST PERMANENT RESIDENTS – THE BOECK FAMILY

In January 1893, Lorentz Meyer Boeck married Kathrine Brinch, daughter of shipowner Christian Brinch. When they inherited Losby Gods as a newly married couple, they moved in as the estate’s first permanent residents. A few years later, Lorentz Meyer Boeck decided that some modifications to the architecture were needed to give it a more elegant style. He had the old Swiss chalet veranda removed and replaced with columns. He raised the height of the corridors to the side wings, altered and enlarged the stairs, and removed several walls. He also installed a new and larger garden landscaped with terraces, lawns, birch-lined drives, spruce hedges, a gazebo, a pool with a fountain, tennis courts and a duck pond with an island and a rowboat. A few years later, an extension was added to the house on the east side, with a new banquet hall and library. The work was completed in 1911, and the manor house was an impressive 1000 square meters.

WORKING CONDITIONS AT LOSBY GODS

Working conditions at Losby were generally considered good, despite the low pay at the time. Living conditions were merely adequate. Losby staff members remained remarkably loyal towards their masters and stayed on for generations. Much of the reason for this was the paternalistic leadership style of Lorentz Meyer Boeck, who developed an interdependent relationship with his crofters and their staff. He offered schooling for the children, croft maintenance, a small piece of



Both Lorentz Meyer Boeck and Kathrine Boeck (Née Brinch) came from extremely wealthy families. After spending some time on the Boeck family property in Oslo, “Munkedammen”, the young newlywed couple moved to Losby Gods in 1893.



Many of the employees at the sawmill were also given living accommodation within the Losby Estate for themselves and their families. A total of 18 houses were subject to the estate. The estate workers were not paid well and it was a hard life, but they enjoyed a safe and social work environment.



land for the crofters' own use, free game meat during hunting season and a felling permit for timber. The staff was poorly paid and forced to work long hours, but they had security and became part of the little community in Losbydalen. This was likely the reason why they were not tempted to explore the big world outside the estate, and why so many remained loyal to the squire throughout their lives.

LØRENSKOG'S FIRST MAYOR

Lorentz Meyer Boeck was an active participant in the community. When Lørenskog became its own municipality in 1908, he was its first mayor. He served for a two-year period and later from 1914 to 1916. He was an active outdoorsman and a true animal lover. He helped found Akershus Skogsselskap, a forestry company, and was chairman of the Norwegian Kennel Club. Upon request by Kong Haakon VII, he hosted the Queen of Holland during her visit to Norway in 1922.

"FESTIVITIES" AT LOSBY GODS

The young landowner couple enjoyed being hosts, and due to their favourable location just outside the capital, the stately manor soon became the hub of a glittering and legendary social life. The manor hosted members of Christiania's best bourgeoisie and prominent diplomats. One of the two major festive seasons was hunting season. The hunting terrain surrounding the estate provided the perfect conditions for the well-to-do from the capital looking for entertainment that included nature and a little excitement. There was an abundance of moose, deer, hares and grouse, and no one else was entitled to hunt in the enormous wooded area belonging to the landowner.

Kong Haakon VII joined the moose hunt several years in a row, and first participated in 1907. The king enjoyed visiting the estate and became a frequent guest and a close friend of the landowner couple. Another popular festive season at Losby Gods each year was the period from Christmas through New Year's. Members of Christiania's elite were invited for grand celebrations.

Most guests travelled by train to Lørenskog Station. Before cars became common, eminent guests were met by coachmen and Losby's 24 horses

at the station. What a sight that must have been! Rows of panting horses, clouds of vapour in the cold air, and Losby's head coachman Johan Alfred Ericsson in full uniform at the head. All the sleds were lined with reindeer skins.

The locals often gathered along the route. They knew that distinguished people would be coming to the village and they wanted a glimpse of the luxurious fur coats and fine hats. Perhaps that got a chance to wave to the elegant procession. Once the guests arrived at the magnificently decorated estate deep in the woods, they were received in the men's lounge, where refreshments were served and the chilly group could warm themselves by the fire. Meanwhile, the service staff brought all the luggage up to the guestrooms and meticulously arranged the guests' clothing on the beds, ready for use. They then carried hot water up to the rooms so that the guests could wash before the evening festivities. Now and then, a chambermaid would secretly try on a few hats or even a gown, and pose with them in front of the mirror. She would have feared being caught, as there would be hell to pay if Mrs. Boeck found out.

After breakfast at the manor, the guests went out for some fresh air with the landowner couple. Outdoor recreation was popular among the upper classes, perhaps because they had the time for such activities. They either rode by horse and sleigh, went skiing or took walks. While the landowner and his guests were out, the maids cleaned the guestrooms, changed the sheets, added wood to the fireplaces, brought in hot and cold water, and hung up the guests' clothing. Occasionally, a cook and a maid joined the guests on their trip outdoors and served them meals on their journey.

Many of the guests left a tip for the chambermaids and servant girls at the end of their stay. Kathrine Boeck was not pleased about this, stating, "This is not a hotel". The guests, however, were determined and usually managed to slip the girls a few coins before leaving. This was a very popular practice among the servant girls.

- 1 Hunting was a popular leisure activity for the gentlemen who visited the estate. Here in the photo, the hunters proudly showcase the day's catch.
- 2 Horse and sleigh ride for the distinguished guests.
- 3 A photo of Kathrine Boeck (Née Brinch,) in the early 1890s.

KATHRINE BOECK – “THE MISTRESS OF LOSBY”

Kathrine Boeck was named “Mistress of Losby” and not without reason. She insisted that there could only be one “Mistress” at Losby, and that was her. No other married woman could call herself “Mistress” in Losbydalen. This worked fairly well, until the wife of head coachman Eriksson arrived in the village. She and her husband came from Sweden and she was accustomed to being addressed as Mistress Eriksson. It was a title she had to give up at Losby, where she was referred to as Madam Eriksson. As the wife of the head coachmen, she felt she had a higher status than the crofters’ wives and servant girls, and was able to persuade everyone to address her as Mistress Eriksson when the “Mistress of Losby” was not present. To this day, Kathrine Boeck is still known as the “Mistress” among the locals in Lørenskog.

Kathrine Boeck was the hostess for all the festivities at Losby Gods. Lorentz Meyer Boeck was the squire and the face of the estate, but the Mistress maintained control over all events within the four walls of the manor. She was very strict on details and was constantly rearranging chairs, glasses and decorations before letting guests into the room. The servant girls who set the table often tried to play pranks on the Mistress by moving a table decoration to see if she would notice. And she did. Everything had its place on the table and had to be arranged correctly.

It was said that Kathrine Boeck wore an expensive French perfume with a strong vanilla scent. The service girls had strict instructions keep the guests out until she had performed a final check. Because of her strong perfume, the servants were able to detect when she had been in the room. They only had to sniff the room for a scent of vanilla to know if the room had been checked.

To this day, we can almost sense the spirit of the Mistress in the hall while preparing a banquet. Even a few of our guests and staff members have noticed the faint scent of vanilla in the manor’s ballroom. Luckily, it seems she has been pleased with our preparations. Only once has she moved one of our butter knives once...

HIGH EXPENSES AND FEW INVESTMENTS

Lorentz Meyer Boeck’s time as the landowner of Losby Gods has been a popular topic of conversation. He was a man of many interests who was strongly committed and had highly developed social skills. The friends he had before he took over Losby Gods often invited Lorentz Meyer Boeck to their own estates, with no expenses spared. The same was true for events that took place at Losby Gods during his time as a landowner. This is how many people prefer to remember Boeck’s time at Losby. A time characterised by exorbitant expenses and consumption, a successful company, and few or no investments. This is why the productive and successful company Losby Bruk did not undergo the improvements needed for modernisation and streamlining, and it became clear when times started changing. It was a period of significant development, and Losby was slowly, but surely left behind.

When Lorentz Meyer Boeck died in 1936, his widow, Kathrine Boeck, sold most of the property they owned, including the venerable Munkedammen in Oslo and Refsnes Gods on Jeløya. She collected the entire inventory from their properties and anything else of value and moved it to Losby Gods.

It was at Losby Gods she wished to spend her remaining days as a widow.

PERIOD AS A WIDOW

During her time as a widow, Kathrine Boeck made numerous changes at Losby Gods. The parties and festivities decreased and the number of staff members at the estate was reduced. War was on the doorstep and the Mistress chose to remain at the estate to defend her property and staff.

After the war, Mistress Boeck was both weary and lonely, with significantly depleted finances. The farms and the sawmills had been difficult to oversee, especially since few or no investments had been made for modernisations. Nevertheless, she was determined to maintain her façade and preserve Losby as it was when her husband was alive.

WORLD WAR II AT LOSBY GODS

Kathrine Boeck was the “Mistress” of the estate and guarded her property. She cared little about the Germans and tried to keep things running as normally as possible at the estate. It was not easy to avoid the impact of the war. Food was being rationed in the municipality and many of Losby’s staff members had to resort to welfare benefits for the poor.



The Germans also removed the train tracks for the Losby line during the war. These were tracks that had been in place since 1861.

Many of the sawmill workers from Losbydalen were arrested by the Germans and driven away in a lorry. They were forced to sit on a flatbed lorry for an entire day while the Germans searched for others to arrest. Kathrine Boeck defied the Germans and offered cigars, cigarettes or small glasses of schnapps to the poor men awaiting their fate. When evening came, the Germans divided the group in two. One group remained in Losby, while the other was sent to the concentration camp at Grini.

LAID TO REST

Kathrine Boeck was highly admired, and viewed as a link between the old and new eras. As a child, she even sat on Per Christians Asbjørnsen's lap as he told her fairy-tales. Then she later became part of a fairy-tale herself, living in a castle on acres of land. When she died on New Year's Eve of 1958-1959, a 90-year era died with her. The estate was emptied of all inventory and locked up in June 1959. The house remained empty for some time, and became a symbol of the golden age it had inhabited.

Both Kathrine Boeck and her husband, Lorentz Meyer Boeck, are buried at "Vår frelsers gravlund" ("Our Saviour's Cemetery") in Oslo in a family plot. The headstone on their grave was obtained from Krokvatn in Losbydalen.

THE LEGACY OF LOSBY GODS

In 1903, Boeck's had a daughter, Ingeborg Sophie Boeck, who died tragically when she was only a day old. To their great sorrow, the couple never had an heir.

When Kathrine Boeck passed away in 1958 on New Year's Eve, her entire estate was bequeathed to her relatives, as her husband was an only child. She was one of four siblings and only two of her siblings had

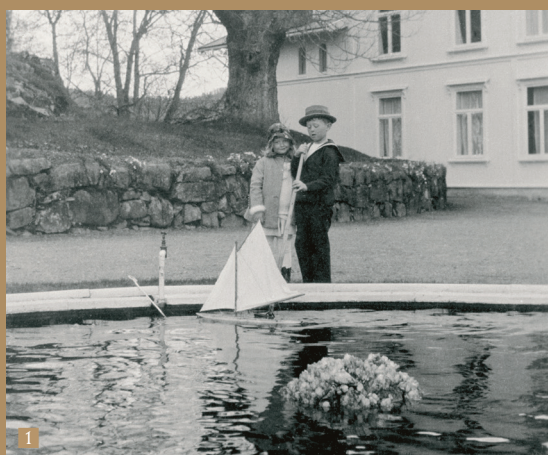
children. It was these two siblings and their families who inherited the estate, along with its inventory and the surrounding forest. Only seven of these heirs still own Losby woods and operate the Losby Mill. Logging is still taking place in the woods, but the sawmill was closed after the Mistress died.

The heirs manage the crofts that were part of the property. These are currently being leased as residences.

The manor was purchased from the property in 1985 for NOK 1.5 million. This was the first time in history that the owner of the manor was someone other than the landowner. It was the Olavsgaard Gruppen AS, and the Fjellheim family who purchased the manor and the 12 decares on which it stood. The plan was to build a hotel with a conference centre and two golf courses with a high international standard. Officials of Lørenskog municipality, who did not wish to see the estate commercialised in such a manner, immediately put a stop to the plan. They felt that the encroachment on the natural surroundings and cultural heritage would be too great. After a 12-year political tug of war and numerous newspaper headlines with debates for and against the Losby project, permission was finally granted in 1997 and the major process of restoring the venerable and stately building commenced.

On 2 October 1999, more than 40 years after Kathrine Boeck's death, the newly restored Losby Gods opened its doors. It is now a complete conference hotel with 70 double rooms, a restaurant, bar, banqueting facilities, a wine cellar and an indoor golf centre.

Hotel operations focus on providing high quality service, facilities and meals in an elegant atmosphere. Losby Gods is now alive and well after a brief 40-year pause in festivities. There is light in the chandeliers, a blaze in the fireplaces, music in the ballrooms and numerous guests visiting Losbydalen. History lives on at Losby Gods. ■



1 Although the estates owners did not have children themselves, they had many nieces and nephews who spent the summers at the estate.

2 The Christmas parties at Losby Gods were legendary, and many eminent guests were invited year after year. The Christmas tree, of course, came from the Losby estate and was decorated according to the tradition of the time.

3 The maids at Losby Gods smiling cheerfully at the camera sometime in the 1940s.

4 Kathrine Boeck lived for 22 years alone on the estate after her husband's death in 1936. Despite many friendships, many employees and a large company to manage, life in Losby was often a bit lonely for "The Lady".





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