



3_TullstationeniVassbotten;ibakgrunnenetnorskegrenseskiltet_Leggmerketilveibommendaallemåttevisepassframtil1960-tallet_Arkiv-EkomusGr-Land_301.TIF

VASSBOTTEN, NORWAY WON THE FRONTIER DISPUTE

After Bohuslän became part of Sweden in 1658 the border with Norway ran along the middle of Idefjorden. The natural continuation was along the Enningdalen river, but this the Norwegian refused to consider, although Sweden was willing to cede them land further north. The river remained Norwegian.

The reason for the quarrel was the lucrative timber trade. Logs were floated down to the saw mills that lined the banks. And salmon fishing certainly counted for a lot in these parts.

Swedish farmers east of the frontier still saw Halden as their market town and gateway to the sea. A Swedish ban on exporting timber by way of Norway had little effect. Other harbors were proposed in vain. Still Halden attracted most of the trade. In 1814 Norway was constrained into a Union with Sweden, dissolved in 1905.

CROSS-BORDER COMMERCE

Here in Vassbotten Janne Johannesson opened a shop in 1892 with money he had earned working in American mines. During World War II 5,000 soldiers were stationed here and business was good. Many refugees took the route over Vassbotten as they fled Norway, and Janne's son Erland, who had succeeded his father, several times risked his life smuggling goods and information into the neighbouring country.

After the war there were shortages everywhere in Norway and import regulations were severe. Men concealed packages in suspiciously baggy plus-fours. Women passed through Customs with bolts of cloth wrapped tightly round their bodies beneath their coats.

More exciting still are stories of the bands of smugglers that ran the tobacco trade in the 1700s, or the prohibition era in Norway 1916-1927 when smuggling fleets lay at Strömstad.

In the 1950s low prices for sugar, flour and margarine drew many Swedes to Norway. Some invited neighbouring children along, so as to increase their permitted allowance. Erland saw his chance and began selling second-rate china. For years no summer was complete without a trip here to match cups and saucers from different sets of tableware.

HALDEN HAD MORE TO OFFER THAN STRÖMSTAD

When herring fishing collapsed in the early 1800s the poverty spread along the coast of Bohuslän. But Östfold and the market town of Halden retained their prosperity and continued to thrive. When Norway was forced into Union with Sweden in 1814, trade increased. Many country folk from the scattered farms on the Swedish side would pass Holtet on their way to Halden, their carts laden with hides, leather, barley, oats, butter and the carcasses of sheep and pigs. Cattle were herded over the border.



14_ Informasjonstavla ved Kitterødgårdene_Foto-Lars-Erik Hammar_2018.TIF

From Västergötland came felt and linen; from the factories pi-iron, nails, tar and pitch. The Swedish peasants would return with stock fish, soap, silks, cotton cloth, wine, spirits, sugar, salt, tobacco, coffee and spices. Many Swedes found work in Norway in the production of cobblestones, tiles, shoes, glass and peat. Towards the end of the Union the climate hardened between the two countries. Customs barriers were erected and the movement of labour stopped. Many thought there was a real danger of war before the Union was dissolved in 1905; and troops were posted on either side of the border.