

Alfred (Aage) Valdemar Anderson Oral History Interview, 1982

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Anderson, Alfred (Aage) Valdemar
Title	Alfred (Aage) Valdemar Anderson Oral History Interview
Dates	1982 (inclusive) 1902 1982
Quantity	2 file folders 1 sound cassette,
Collection Number	t159
Summary	An oral history interview with Alfred (Aage) Valdemar Andersen, a Danish immigrant.
Repository	Pacific Lutheran University, Archives and Special Collections Archives and Special Collections Pacific Lutheran University 12180 Park Avenue South Tacoma, Washington 98447 Telephone: 253-535-7586 Fax: 253-535-7315 archives@plu.edu
Access Restrictions	The oral history collection is open to all users.
Additional Reference Guides	
Languages	English
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Biographical Note

Aage Valdemar Andersen was born on August 24, 1902 in Hornbæk, Denmark to Ernst Andersen and Louise Jensen. Ernst owned a shoe store but spent most of his time as a Lutheran missionary. There were four other children in the family: Dan, Skjøld, Else, and Frede. Aage finished high school in Denmark and then became an apprentice in the hardware business for four years. Aage obtained a good job after his apprenticeship but wanted to travel, which led him to immigrate to the United States in 1924. He stayed in New York City for about one year and then went to Detroit, where he worked for General Motors. Aage then went to British Columbia, where his brothers had immigrated in the meantime. He did harvest work with them for a couple of months before moving to Seattle, WA, where he got back into the hardware business. In Seattle, Aage also met his wife, Ellen Hoch, and was married in 1928. Ellen was from Fredericia, Denmark, and they had two children, Elsie and Carl. Aage worked as an electrician at Sand Point Naval Station during WWII, after which he and Ellen bought their own store, where they sold gifts and hardware. Aage also became a storekeeper in Alaska for ten seasons, during which time Ellen managed the store at home. After the store, Aage made another business venture and built a motel in Moses Lake, WA with a friend named Sigmund Tetten. Aage sold

the motel after eleven years, retiring at the age of sixty-six. After retirement, Aage and Ellen settled in Poulsbo, WA and bought a motor home. They have visited all fifty states and have also visited Denmark several times. Aage has belonged to the Danish Brotherhood and the Sons of Norway and is proud of his heritage. However, he also feels he is "as good of a citizen [American] as anybody is going to be."

Lineage

Full Name: Alfred (Aage) Valdemar Andersen. Father: Ernst Andersen. Mother: Louise Jensen. Paternal Grandfather: Jens Christian Andersen. Paternal Grandmother: Stine Tipperup. Maternal Grandfather: Lars Jensen. Maternal Grandmother: Else Jensen. Brothers and Sisters: Dan Andersen, Skjoldal Andersen, Else Andersen, Frede Andersen. Spouse: Ellen Hoch Andersen. Children: Elsie Andersen, Carl Andersen.

Content Description

This interview was conducted with A.V. (Aage Valdemar) Andersen on April 1, 1982 in Poulsbo, Washington. It provides information on family background, emigration, employment, marriage, and Danish heritage. The interview was conducted in English. Also see Ellen Andersen.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

There are no restrictions on use.

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Acquisition Information

The Oral History collection contains the recorded interviews of 282 men and women who emigrated from Scandinavia and settled in the Pacific Northwest. The project was started during an experimental course on Scandinavian Women in the Pacific Northwest. Students in the course were encouraged to interview women and learn about their experiences as immigrants to the United States. The project was continued and expanded with support from the president's office and by grants from the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation, from the Joel E. Ferris Foundation and the Norwegian Emigration Fund of the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The project was directed by Dr. Janet E. Rasmussen. Upon completion, the collection was transferred to the Archives and Special Collections Department.

Related Materials

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Processing Note

The interview was conducted by Donna Mallonee using a cassette recorder. A research copy was also prepared from the original. To further preserve the content of the interview, it is now being transferred to compact disc. We deliberately did not transcribe the entire interview because we want the researchers to listen to the interviewee's own voice. The transcription index highlights important aspects of the interview and the tape counter numbers noted on the Partial Interview Transcription are meant as approximate finding guides and refer to the location of a subject on the cassette/CD. The recording quality is good.

The collection was transcribed by Mary Sue Gee, Julie Peterson and Becky Husby.

Bibliography

Rasmussen, Janet Elaine. *New Land New Lives: Scandinavian Immigrants to the Pacific Northwest* Tacoma, Washington University of Washington Press 1993

Detailed Description of the Collection

The partial interview transcription highlights important aspects of the interview. Numbers may be used as guides to important subjects. Two numbers separated by a slash indicate that the first number is for cassette and the second for CD.

Container(s)	Description
Cassette	
159, side 1	010 : PERSONAL BACKGROUND His name in Denmark was Aage Andersen which has been changed to Alfred Valdemar Andersen. Born on 24 August 1902 in Hornbaak, Denmark, which is about 30 miles outside of Copenhagen. This place means "Horn Brook." This is a summer resort area.
159, side 1	072: PARENTS Ernst and Louise. Father had a shoe store but he spent more time as a Lutheran missionary. He was quite strict. Had a good home life. The oldest brother has the house which now houses stores and apartments.
159, side 1	125: GRANDPARENTS Paternal grandfather sailed in the war in 1868. Maternal grandfather had a delicatessen in Copenhagen.
159, side 1	158: BROTHERS AND SISTERS Oldest brother, Dan. Skjold lives in Canada. Has a sister on Orcas Island. Youngest brother, Frede lives in Denmark.
159, side 1	175: FAMILY HISTORY

Container(s)	Description
	Maternal grandfather came from Sweden and maternal grandmother came from Denmark. He also has some Norwegian blood. Paternal grandfather was an interesting man and wrote a few small books.
159, side 1	210: CHRISTMAS Lighted candles on the tree.
159, side 1	222: BIRTHDAYS Was a big occasion.
159, side 1	225: WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES Big occasion. Neighbors come in the night and put up a big arch. Then about 6am they come and sing wedding songs. (Added by Aage's wife, Ellen)
159, side 1	244: SCHOOL DAYS IN DENMARK Finished high school there. Took German, Swedish, and arithmetic. There weren't as many choices of what they could take. They had gym and religion once a week. He didn't work while he was going to school.
159, side 1	268: WORK IN DENMARK Was an apprentice for four years to learn the hardware business. Had to go to night school. He opened the store at 7am and came home from the night school about 12 midnight. After his apprenticeship he went to Copenhagen and got a job at a place which made light fixtures and also hardware. It was a good job.
159, side 1	300: REASONS FOR EMIGRATION Wanted to travel. Left by himself. Didn't have to leave because he had a good job and family in Denmark. Felt free and happy when he left home.
159, side 1	315: Left by ship in Copenhagen and went to New York.
159, side 1	318: NEW YORK EXPERIENCES He and a friend he met on the ship went to the Danish Mission Home. They had to take the subway there and get off at Prospect Ave. When the subway stopped the sign said "Women" so they didn't get off there. They found the place and stayed a few days, but there were too many bed bugs
159, side 1	349: FIRST IMPRESSIONS IN NEW YORK Got a job right away because he saw so many people who were broke. He was shoveling snow outside a bakery shop where he saw an entire family laying by the grate from the shop to keep warm. He had never seen anything like that in Denmark. There were many people without homes.
159, side 1	396: PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

Container(s)	Description
	Had a job here for 2-3 months.
159, side 1	400: DETROIT Was going to get a job at Ford, but it was too much work so he went to General Motors. The man he gave his application to was Danish so Aage got a good job. After this he sold vacuum cleaners.
159, side 1	430: HARVEST HELP Saw an advertisement. Took the train to Winnipeg, Canada and then up to Regina, Canada. They ran into a farmer who asked them if they needed a job. The horses on the farm didn't understand his Danish commands.
159, side 1	465: BROTHERS Met his brothers who were farther west. They had immigrated in the mean time. They were working as harvest hands and moving from farm to farm. Aage went and worked with them. This was 1925. They lived in tents.
159, side 1	490: DANISH COLONY Brother started a colony in Edgewater, BC. Went and stayed there for 2-3 months then went to Vancouver, BC, then to Seattle.
159, side 1	500: SEATTLE Hard to find work. Got a job at American Can Company. Wanted to get back into the hardware business. Worked for Seattle Hardware Company for about four years.
159, side 1	524: MARRIAGE 1928 Met his wife at the Danish Church. Ellen adds that they married in that church and that their children were baptized, confirmed, and one was married there. The other was married in Montana.
159, side 1	530: SEATTLE HARDWARE COMPANY Saw no future in this company. There were no unions or anything so he quit.
159, side 1	535: OTHER JOBS Ellen adds that Aage had a milk route and sold supplies to restaurants.
159, side 1	540: HOME Lived between Seattle and Tacoma near Beacon Heights. During the depression they sold the house there and moved into Seattle where it was easier to find work.
159, side 1	553: Didn't work with many other Danish people.
159, side 1	560: CHANGES IN WORK FROM THEN AND NOW

Container(s)	Description
	<p>People were more willing to do anything. There wasn't relief or unemployment. During the depression he bought an old truck and went to the public market and bought fruit and went out and sold this in the country. They made a couple of dollars a day doing this. Too proud to go on relief.</p>
159, side 1	<p>595: ORGANIZATIONS Belongs to the same organization as his wife, Ellen, plus the Sons of Norway. Used to belong to a club called "Mental Club". Belonged to the Danish Brotherhood.</p>
159, side 1	<p>605: WORK DURING WWII Worked at Sand Point Naval Station. He worked as an electrician for four years there.</p>
159, side 1	<p>618: GIFT SHOP Bought a gift shop on University then they moved out on Holmen Road where they had a giftware and hardware store. Sold mostly imported gifts and greeting cards. The first business they bought was small and they enlarged it quite a bit with appliances and mail order. At Holmen Road, they had too much competition with drugstores and other stores.</p>
159, side 1	<p>644: ALASKA Got a job as a storekeeper and went there ten seasons. Ellen took care of the home business. The store in Alaska was about seventy miles from Juneau. Then he worked at a larger store in False Pass in the Aleutian Islands, which is about 100 miles away from Dutch Harbor.</p>
159, side 1	<p>675: MOTEL BUSINESS A friend, Sigmund Tetten (?) and he built a motel at Moses Lake, Washington. Had the motel for eleven years until he was 66 and then he quit the business. Sold the motel and retired to Poulsbo, Washington.</p>
159, side 1	<p>686: TRAVELLING Bought a motor home and traveled for seven years. They have been in every state in the United States. Have visited Denmark several times. Have been to Hawaii. Took a steamer from Seattle down through the Panama Canal and down to St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.</p>
159, side 1	<p>700: VISITS TO DENMARK Nice to visit, nice people and country. The cities are different. The Pacific Northwest is his country. Compares old Copenhagen to today. Glad he immigrated. He feels that everyone should travel around so they will appreciate what they have here.</p>
159, side 1	<p>733: CORRESPONDENCE</p>

Container(s)	Description
	Keeps in touch with his sister-in-law in Denmark. Has cousins there. They used to have family reunions every other year.
159, side 1	744: FAMILY DISTRUBUTION About one third in each of the countries: Denmark, US, and Australia. His father's brother went to Australia and was a minister. This man had about nine children.
159, side 1	782: FATHER Ellen adds that since his father was a minister Aage never missed a Sunday in Sunday school from when he was big enough until when he was fourteen years old. Had prayers with all the meals and before they went to bed. She says he kind of got fed up with it. She compares it to ice cream and says he likes it but not five times a day.
159, side 1	795: DANISH PEOPLE They discuss Danish humor. In Jutland where his wife is from, they have a different kind of humor. They talk about a humorous incident during the war.
159, side 1	822: IMPORTANCE OF HERITAGE Proud, not ashamed of being Danish. The United States hasn't had to spend any money on him. He went to school in Denmark. Did go to night school here to become an American citizen.
159, side 1	830: CITIZENSHIP He feels he is as good of a citizen as anybody is going to be. Took a year to fill out the papers and get into this country. The sponsors had to promise that you wouldn't be a burden to the US. Now the people who come in are a burden from the day they come. This country is built on the hard work of many immigrants.
159, side 1	845: GREENHORNS They were called "Greenhorns" when they first came.
159, side 1	848: CHANGES IN DENMARK Ellen really doesn't know how many of the old traditions they really keep up anymore. Now they have TV and they don't use the same forms of entertainment as before.
159, side 1	855: SANKT HANS June 24th. They light bonfires and dance around to celebrate midsummer. They had a witch on the top of the bonfire.
159, side 1	877: FASTELAVN The children would decorate branches and hit their parents' bed with them to wake them up. Then coffee and buns would be served.

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Danes -- Ethnic identity
Danish-Americans -- Interviews
Danish-Americans -- Northwest, Pacific--Social life and customs
Emigration and immigration

Personal Names :

Anderson, Alfred (Aage) Valdemar--Interviews
(creator)
Andersen, Carl
Andersen, Dan
Andersen, Elsie
Andersen, Skjold
Tetten, Sigmund
Andersen, Else
Andersen, Ernst
Andersen, Frede
Hoch, Ellen
Jensen, Louise

Corporate Names :

Danish Brotherhood in America. Lodge 29 (Seattle, Wash.)
General Electric Company
Naval Station Puget Sound (Wash.)
Seattle Hardware Company (Seattle, Wash.)
Sons of Norway (U.S.) Leif Erikson Lodge No. 1 (Seattle,Wash.)

Family Names :

Andersen family
Hoch family
Jensen family
Tetten family
Tipperup family

Geographical Names :

British Columbia
Detroit (Mich.)
Fredericia (Denmark)
Hornbæk (Denmark)
Moses Lake (Wash.)
New York (N. Y.)
Poulsbo (Wash.)
Seattle (Wash.)

Form or Genre Terms :

Oral histories

Occupations :

Farmers
Motel management

Titles within the Collection :

New Land New Lives. Scadinavian Immigrants to the Pacific Northwest.

Finding aid prepared by Kerstin Ringdahl and Amity Smetzler
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