

# Ruth Lindberg Nelson Oral History, 1896-1981

## Overview of the Collection

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Creator</b>                     | Nelson, Ruth Lindberg  |
| <b>Title</b>                       | Ruth Lindberg Nelson Oral History  |
| <b>Dates</b>                       | 1896-1981 (inclusive)<br>1896 1981   |
| <b>Quantity</b>                    | 3 file folders, 1 photograph, 1 sound cassette, 0 compact discs.   |
| <b>Collection Number</b>           | t066   |
| <b>Summary</b>                     | An oral history interview with Ruth Lindberg Nelson, a Swedish immigrant.  |
| <b>Repository</b>                  | <a href="#">Pacific Lutheran University, Archives and Special Collections</a><br>Archives and Special Collections<br>Pacific Lutheran University<br>12180 Park Avenue South<br>Tacoma, Washington<br>98447<br>Telephone: 253-535-7586<br>Fax: 253-535-7315<br><a href="mailto:archives@plu.edu">archives@plu.edu</a> |
| <b>Access Restrictions</b>         | The oral history collection is open to all users.  |
| <b>Additional Reference Guides</b> |  |
| <b>Languages</b>                   | English  |
| <b>Sponsor</b>                     | Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.   |

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## Biographical Note

Ruth Nelson was born Rut Otilia Lindberg on July 29, 1896 in Rofors, Sweden. Her father, Anders Lindberg, worked as a blacksmith to support Ruth's family, which included her mother, Ingeborg, and her five brothers and sisters. As a young girl, Ruth attended school to learn "the 3 R's" and to learn domestic skills like crocheting and knitting. Her job for the family was to wash their clothes. Ruth had an aunt who lived in America; when she visited in 1914, Ruth decided to return to America with her. Assuring her family that she would only be gone five years, Ruth departed Sweden. She accompanied her aunt to Bozeman, Montana and arrived there in July of 1914. Ruth found work as a babysitter for a family in town. After living in Montana for a few years, Ruth moved to Tacoma, Washington. In 1918, she began nurse's training at Tacoma General Hospital. That year, she fell victim to the flu epidemic. In 1919, Ruth met John Nelson, and they married soon thereafter. Together, they had one daughter named Nancy. Ruth became very involved in her Lutheran church and in the Vasa Lodge, which she joined in 1921. She retains her heritage by cooking traditional Swedish fare, collecting Swedish plates, and occasionally speaking the language. Several times, her Swedish relatives, with whom she has kept close contact, have visited her. Ruth has returned to Sweden four times, but she regards America as her home.

Lineage

Full Name: Ruth Otilia Lindberg Nelson, Maiden Name: Rut Otilia Lindberg. Father: Anders Lindberg, Mother: Ingeborg Jonsson Lindberg. Brothers and Sisters: Elin Lindberg, Karl Gustav Lindberg, George Lindberg, Anna Lindberg, Ingeborg Lindberg. Spouse: John Edwin Nelson. Children: Nancy Nelson Stolz.

## Content Description

The interview was conducted with Ruth Nelson on July 1, 1981 in Tacoma, Washington. This interview contains information on personal background, life in Sweden, emigration, family, community life, and Swedish heritage. Also available are a photograph of Ruth and John Nelson on their 56th anniversary and a profile on them from the Tacoma News Tribune in regards to their 60th anniversary. Also see John Nelson. The interview was conducted in English with some Swedish towards the end of the interview.

## Use of the Collection

### Restrictions on Use

There are no restrictions on use.

## Administrative Information

### Custodial History

The Oral History collection 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. The collection was transferred to the Archives and Special Collections Department.

### Acquisition Information

### Related Materials

To search and view Pacific Lutheran University's digitized images, visit our [Digital Assets Website](#)

### Processing Note

The interview was conducted by Morrene Nesvig 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

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## 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  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>Cassette</b> |  |
| 66, side 1      | 009/05: PERSONAL BACKGROUND<br>Born July 29, 1896, Rofors, Sweden.   |
| 66, side 1      | 031: PARENTS<br>Anders Lindberg, blacksmith and Ingeborg Jonsson.  |
| 66, side 1      | 042: BROTHERS AND SISTERS<br>(See attached.)   |
| 66, side 1      | 053: GRANDPARENTS<br>Doesn't remember them.  |
| 66, side 1      | 061: BACKGROUND FAMILY NAME<br>Aunt from America comes to visit.   |
| 66, side 1      | 071: SCHOOL DAYS (SWEDEN)<br>Learned to crochet, knit, the 3 R's.  |
| 66, side 1      | 120/06: CHORES (SWEDEN)<br>Appointment to wash clothes. How it was done.   |
| 66, side 1      | 155: WHY SHE DECIDED TO COME TO AMERICA<br>Came with aunt, brother was supposed to have gone, but didn't. Was taking care of boy in Roefors. |
| 66, side 1      | 202: FAMILY'S FEELINGS AT DEPARTURE<br>She was only staying five years. Went to Vaermland to Goteborg to Oslo, Norway and then to the U.S.   |

| Container(s) | Description  |
|--------------|--|
| 66, side 1   | 206: BOAT TRIP: During WWI<br>(See counter, I-226 and I-277.)  |
| 66, side 1   | 222: FEELINGS LEAVING SWEDEN<br>Sad, too young to think.   |
| 66, side 1   | 226/07: BOAT TRIP<br>Second class. WWI and German U-boats. Stormy crossing North Sea (see counter I-206 and I-277).                            |
| 66, side 1   | 256: ARRIVAL U.S.<br>July 1914. Destination Bozeman, Montana. Stopped in Livingston, Minnesota, and St. Paul, Minnesota.                       |
| 66, side 1   | 277: ENGLAND TO U.S.<br>Nine days. Going to go on Lusitania but missed ship. Departed from Liverpool, England.                                 |
| 66, side 1   | 297: LANDED BOSTON<br>Depended upon aunt at all times.   |
| 66, side 1   | 322: IMMIGRATION<br>Showing papers, etc. Did not go through Ellis Island.  |
| 66, side 1   | 336: SWEDISH KEEPSAKES<br>Bible and trunk. The Bible she got for confirmation.   |
| 66, side 1   | 350: TRAIN TRIP<br>Boston to Minneapolis to Livingston, Montana. Sister lived in Bozeman, Montana.   |
| 66, side 1   | 375/08: ON TO BOZEMAN<br>Stayed and helped sisters. Learning English. Norwegian Immigrants n Bozeman and Norwegian Church (See counter I-390). |
| 66, side 1   | 390: LEARNING ENGLISH<br>Getting a teacher. Classes in evening. (see counter I-375)  |
| 66, side 1   | 412/09: ON TO TACOMA<br>Employed at a banker's home babysitting in Montana, the family's name was Baker.                                       |
| 66, side 1   | 457: TACOMA 1918   |

| Container(s) | Description   |
|--------------|---|
|              | Training as nurse, Tacoma General Hospital. Flu epidemic, she became ill. (See counter I-647)   |
| 66, side 1   | 488/10: MEETING HUSBAND<br>Married 1919. Cousin lived in Tacoma and associating with Swedish people.                                    |
| 66, side 1   | 513: IMPRESSIONS OF TACOMA<br>Much bigger than Bozeman.   |
| 66, side 1   | 525: FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH<br>Recreation and social doings. (see counter II-067).   |
| 66, side 1   | 536: VASA LODGE<br>Joined 1921. About Sweden and Swedes. Describes community activities. (see counter II-077)                           |
| 66, side 1   | 578: CHILDREN<br>(See lineage.)   |
| 66, side 1   | 589: KEEPING HOUSE (EARLY DAYS)<br>Hard to get things during WWI and WWII, rationing and prices high.                                   |
| 66, side 1   | 616/11: PRACTICAL NURSING<br>Supplement to family income.   |
| 66, side 1   | 647: MEDICAL CARE<br>Differences from today. Bad flu epidemic 1918 (see counter I-457)  |
| 66, side 2   | 014/12: CHRISTMAS<br>Big dinners, making pickled herring (she giver her recipe), learning to make lutefisk and white sauce from mother. |
| 66, side 2   | 045: SWEDISH COOKING<br>Pepparkaka, spritz, rice pudding.   |
| 66, side 2   | 058: SWEDISH RELATIVES VISIT<br>Still speak Swedish. English used when U.S. relatives visit (see counter II-157 and II-175).            |
| 66, side 2   | 067: FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH<br>Important part of community. Member ladies society (see counter I-525).                                   |
| 66, side 2   | 077: VASA LODGE<br>Member for 50 years (see counter I-536). Valhalla was for men.   |

| Container(s) | Description   |
|--------------|---|
| 66, side 2   | 081/13: HOBBIES<br>Needlework, knitting, and crochet. Collecting Swedish plates.          |
| 66, side 2   | 099: FOUR TRIPS BACK TO SWEDEN<br>Correspondence back and forth. Rofors changes a lot.    |
| 66, side 2   | 138/01,02: IMPRESSIONS OF SWEDEN TODAY<br>Like Sweden, this home now, life better in U.S. |
| 66, side 2   | 155: SPEAKING SWEDISH<br>Hardly ever unless husband gets mad (see counter II-58).         |
| 66, side 2   | 160: IMPORTANCE OF SWEDISH HERITAGE<br>Good feeling, means a lot.                         |
| 66, side 2   | 175: RELATIVES VISITING FROM SWEDEN<br>Kept up link (see counter II-058).                 |
| 66, side 2   | 183:<br>Closes with Swedish inscription from her book.                                    |

## Names and Subjects

### Subject Terms :

Christmas  
 Education -- Sweden  
 Emigration and immigration  
 Family -- Sweden  
 Ocean travel  
 Sweden -- Social conditions -- 1945-  
 Swedish-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Interviews  
 Swedish-Americans--Social life and customs

### Personal Names :

Jonsson, Ingeborg  
 Nelson, John Edwin (Johan Nilsson)  
 Lindberg, Anders  
 Lindberg, Rut Otilla  
 Nelson, Ruth Otilla--Interviews  
 (creator)  
 Stolz, Nancy Nelson

### Corporate Names :

First Lutheran Church (Tacoma, Wash.)  
 Vasa Order of America. Lodge Number 233 (Tacoma, Wash.)

### Family Names :

Jonsson family

Lindberg family

Nelson family

**Geographical Names :**

Bozeman (Mont.)

Knäred (Sweden)

Röfors (Sweden)

Tacoma (Wash.)

Värmlands län (Sweden)

**Form or Genre Terms :**

Oral histories

**Occupations :**

Blacksmiths

Domestics

Nurses

Finding aid prepared by Kerstin Ringdahl and Amity Smetzler  
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