Inga Karolina Johanna Brobak Davidson Oral History Interview, 1982

Overview of the Collection

- **Creator**: Davidson, Inga Karolina Johanna Brobak
- **Title**: Inga Karolina Johanna Brobak Davidson Oral History Interview
- **Dates**: 1982 (inclusive)
- **Quantity**: 3 file folders, 3 photographs, 1 sound cassette
- **Collection Number**: t127
- **Summary**: An oral history interview with Inga Karolina Johanna Brobak Davidson, a Norwegian 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, Sponsor
  - **Languages**: English
  - **Sponsor**: Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Biographical Note

Inga Davidson was born on November 3, 1898 in Revik, Vågsøy, Norway to Mons Brobak and Magnhild Heggen. Mons was a fisherman, and Magnhild was his second wife. The Brobak’s lived on a farm, and in addition to Inga, there were seven other children in the family: Mikal, Anton, Marie, Anna, Alette, Johannes, and Anders. Inga attended school for eight years before being confirmed, after which she began working in a cannery. Following the cannery, Inga worked for a family and then for Dr. Olvik in a health institution south of Bergen. Inga’s older brothers had immigrated to America when she was fairly young, and when she was twenty-six, she received a letter from Anton and decided to join them in Seattle, WA. Language was a difficulty at first, but Inga attended night school and learned from the families she cooked and cleaned for. In addition to housekeeping, Inga also made dresses at a shop in Seattle.

Inga met her husband, Odin Davidson, at a joint birthday party of hers and a friend. Odin was a fisherman and the brother-in-law of Inga’s friend. They were married at Ballard Lutheran Church.
and then rented an apartment in Tacoma. In 1930, Inga's daughter Judith was born. Inga also had another daughter, but she died of rheumatic fever when she was fourteen. Inga and Odin eventually bought a house in Mt. View, where Inga became active in the Lutheran Church and Ladies Aid. During the summers, she also worked in a cannery while Odin was out fishing. At the Davidson's home, Norwegian was spoken and Inga continued to cook traditional Norwegian foods. Nevertheless, Inga loves the United States and is thankful to live here.

Lineage


Content Description

This interview was conducted with Inga Davidson on January 14, 1982 in Tacoma, Washington. It contains information on family background, emigration, work, marriage and family, church, and Norwegian heritage. The interview also provides photographs of Inga's family and Inga and her husband Odin at the time of the interview. The interview was conducted in English. Also see Odin Davidson, T128.

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 Inger Nygaard Carr 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


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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container(s)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cassette</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127, side 1</td>
<td>006: Inga Karlina Johanna Brobak Davidson. Born in Norfjord, Vågsøy, Norway. This is an island belonging to Norfjord, close to Bergen. Maaloey was a town on the island. Born November 3, 1898.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127, side 1</td>
<td>020: PARENTS Magnhild Heggen and Mons Brobak. They lived in Revik. Name comes from 'bro' bridge and 'bak' hill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127, side 1</td>
<td>028: Father was a fisherman, married, and had six children. First wife's name was Anna, from Kvalen. Inga's mother was his second wife from Indefjord (?).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127, side 1</td>
<td>037: SISTER Her name is Anna Nebak(?) and she lives in Puyallup now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127, side 1</td>
<td>043:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inga Karolina Johanna Brobak Davidson Oral History Interview, 1982
http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv14024
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had a farm when she was growing up in Norway. Father and brothers fished. Three brothers came to America, Anton, Mikal, and Johannes. They all came to the West Coast. This is why Inga came to America.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>054: SISTERS</td>
<td>Marie married and had a child in Norway. She died young. Alette Lilevik was an officer for the Salvation Army. She married a man from Oslo. A brother Anders stayed in Norway around Hardanger until he died.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>068: BROTHERS IN THE U.S.</td>
<td>One brother married and had children. The family lived in Norway without their father for a while and later joined him in Seattle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>079: FATHER FISHING</td>
<td>Did cod fishing and other kinds of fishing. Had small boats. Farm was good size, grew food for the family, sold some animals. Father helped at home too. He did not fish far away. Cows were up on the hills and needed to be milked and the milk carried home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>095: GRANDPARENTS</td>
<td>Paternal grandfather was Mons Brobak and Anna. Maternal grandparents never saw. Knut Heggen was her mother's father.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107: HOME</td>
<td>River and ocean close by. Lots of white sand which is now very famous sand. &quot;As white as wheat flour.&quot; There are now many tourists in this area because a bridge has been built between the island and the mainland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121: CHILDHOOD HOME</td>
<td>Big. Brothers left home before Inga really knew them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131: CHRISTMAS</td>
<td>Had tree in the middle of the floor. Went to neighbors and sang around the Christmas tree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137:</td>
<td>CHURCH: Walked. Went Christmas Day, the preacher came by boat. Had church every three weeks because the pastor had other churches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148: CHRISTMAS FOODS</td>
<td>Spekekjott, julestik (this steak is a side of lamb salted, dried, and steamed for three hours), ate potatoes, and flatbroed with it. Also ate roemmegroet.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<td>127, side 1</td>
<td>Could not afford to have many gifts. They usually made their own. Did baking and preparing before Christmas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 127, side 1 | 176: CUSTOMS  
Heard about the Julenissen but did not believe in it. |
| 127, side 1 | 181: SCHOOL  
Walked. Went for eight years. Went to confirmation after school. Skated to places in the winter, too rough for skiing. |
| 127, side 1 | 199:  
Had a nice childhood. Worked from the time that she was little milking cows. |
| 127, side 1 | 204: WORK  
Worked in a cannery in Måløy after school. Also worked for a family. Worked for Dr. Olvik, south of Bergen in an institution for sick people, worked in the dining room. He was a natural doctor, cured without medicine. Used foods, proper diets. |
| 127, side 1 | 222:  
Age 26 Inga got a letter from her brother Anton in America. Anton worked for the Standard Oil Company in Seattle. Ivar Dahl, Inga’s uncle was really responsible for getting them all to America. Her brother sent money for her ticket over. |
| 127, side 1 | 254:  
Came to America in 1927. It did not bother her to come over because she had done so much traveling in Norway. |
| 127, side 1 | 267: TRIP OVER  
Took the Stavangerfjord, left from Bergen. Took a week to get all the way to the West Coast. Really enjoyed the boat trip. |
| 127, side 1 | 293:  
In New York they were examined for what they brought over. No trouble. Got on a train to come west. |
| 127, side 1 | 296: LANGUAGE  
Could not speak any English. No difficulties making out on the train. Met by her brother in Seattle. |
| 127, side 1 | 300: WORK  
Started work in Seattle working for families doing cleaning and cooking. This helped her to learn English. |
| 127, side 1 | 310:  
Through the years she visited the West Coast of America many times. She took her children and grandchildren to see their birthplace. She also went to South America. She took her husband Karl with her to visit his relatives in Peru. She loved all these visits. He was very interested in the Spanish language. She visited Portugal and France many times. She had a great love for all her visits to foreign countries. |
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<td>Brothers had a house. She did housekeeping for them. Did dressmaking at a shop in Seattle. She had learned this skill in Norway. Paid by how many dresses they made.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127, side 1</td>
<td>338: MOST DIFFICULT THINGS ABOUT COMING TO THE U.S. Language. Went to night school and learned there. People were nice to her here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127, side 1</td>
<td>359: CITIZENSHIP Received this after she was married.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127, side 1</td>
<td>362: MEETING HUSBAND Interesting story. Had a friend who had a birthday on the same day as her. At a birthday party she met her friend's brother-in-law. Later to be her husband. This friend was from the area in Norway that Inga was from, her name was Carolina (?). Inga's husband name is Odin Davidson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127, side 1</td>
<td>386: WEDDING Went to Ballard Lutheran Church. Friends were there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127, side 1</td>
<td>397: Husband fished. They had an apartment in Tacoma. Daughter Judy was born in St. Joseph's Hospital in Tacoma. Husband was gone fishing for months at a time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127, side 1</td>
<td>420: DAUGHTER Married and has six children. Husband's name is Wilfred. Inga had another daughter who died of rheumatic fever at the age of 14. Judy's husband was a teacher, now does mechanical things for Boeing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127, side 1</td>
<td>441: Inga lived in Seattle for a while until they bought a house in Mt. View. Lived here many years and had a farm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127, side 1</td>
<td>465: MT. VIEW LUTHERAN CHURCH Active in the church and in Ladies Aid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127, side 1</td>
<td>474: WORK Did work in the cannery during the summer when her husband was gone fishing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127, side 1</td>
<td>480: FARM Had sheep, cows, used the wool for blankets. Ate lamb meat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127, side 1</td>
<td>490: THINGS BROUGHT FROM NORWAY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Container(s) | Description
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Rosemaling. | 
127, side 1 | 509: Inga's mother made all their clothes when they were young. She did carding, spinning, weaving, and sewing.

127, side 1 | 514: GRANDCHILDREN
Oldest girl lives in Santa Clara, California. Her name is Pamela. She works for Crocker Bank. Oldest son, Rodney lives in Bellevue and works for the Oil Company. Kevin had been in Germany in the Army. He is now a security officer at a bank. Darrell is a cook in a restaurant. A grandson does work for the National Journal in Washington D.C. Todd is the youngest. Randy is here in Tacoma.

127, side 1 | 580: SCANDINAVIAN ORGANIZATIONS
Does not belong to any Scandinavian organizations, they are too far away. She is more involved with the church.

127, side 1 | 587: TRIPS BACK TO NORWAY
1951 took a trip back with her sisters. CHANGES: Homes had more nice things, more money, better life. Pay a lot of taxes, government takes care of health care and retirement. Childhood home still there, has been sold to the neighbors.

127, side 1 | 631: BOAT TRIP
Talks about taking a boat back to the U.S. and spending the night on the boat in New York. Says she looked at the Statue of Liberty all night, it was so beautiful. Appreciates being in America.

127, side 1 | 640: CITIZENSHIP
Studied for it, went to court. Had not trouble getting it.

127, side 1 | 658: FEELINGS ABOUT LEAVING NORWAY
Not ashamed. Norwegians are intelligent good people. Thankful to be in the U.S. Had no intentions of staying in Norway. Still has some contacts in Norway, writes letters.

127, side 2 | 013:
Brother's family still is in Tacoma. His children live around University Place. They had all come from Norway in 1929.

127, side 2 | 027: COMPARING SWEDES TO NORWEGIANS
All Swedes have been very nice people. Swedes are used to a better life than Norwegians. Swedes had more money.

127, side 2 | 040:
Inga’s daughter grew up speaking Norwegian. It was the language spoken at home. Her daughter went to PLU.

049: CUSTOMS STILL MAINTAINED
Julestek, lefse, gumme (cooked milk until it's brown). Still do baking at Christmas.

068: NORWEGIAN LANGUAGE
Has forgotten much of the language and Norwegian expressions.

085:
Inga loves this country. People are very nice to her here. Work here more fair than in Norway. Paid about $30 a month, when working with a family, including room and board.

128:
In Norway maids were slaves, could not eat with the family. Could eat with the family in America.

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms:
Christmas
Emigration and immigration
Family--Economic aspects--Norway
Family--Norway
Norway--Social conditions--1945-
Norwegian-Americans--Ethnic identity
Norwegian-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Interviews
Norwegian-Americans--Social life and customs
Railroad travel

Personal Names:
Davidson, Inga--Interviews
(Brown)
Brobak, Mons
Davidson, Judy
Heggen, Ingeborg
Heggen, Knut
Kvalheim, Malena
Davidson, Odin
Heggen, Maghnild

Corporate Names:
Ballard First Lutheran Church (Seattle, Wash.)
Mountain View Lutheran Church (Edgewood, Wash.)
Stavangerfjord (Steamship)

Family Names:

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