

Elias Larsen Oral History Interview, 1981

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Larsen, Elias
Title	Elias Larsen Oral History Interview
Dates	1981 (inclusive) 1981 1981
Quantity	3 file folder 1 photograph 1 sound cassette
Collection Number	t084
Summary	An oral history interview with Elias Larsen, 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	English
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Biographical Note

Elias Larsen was born on May 7, 1888 in the country near Ålesund, which is near Kristiansund and Molde on the West Coast of Norway; he was the youngest of eight children by Lars Andreasen and Rasmina Eliassen. Elias went to school for seven years, and he lived in Ålesund for six months to go to school; he worked at a grocery school as an errand boy while he attended this school. One of his brothers emigrated in 1902, and two other brothers and a sister emigrated in 1903, 1904, and 1905, respectively. Elias got the money to emigrate from a brother, and he left Ålesund on August 7, 1906. He entered the U.S. at Boston; took the train to Portland, OR, where his brothers lived, and arrived in Portland on September 1. He got a job at the Portland Lumber Company and worked there for about one year; he then worked at the Southern Pacific train shed and started doing carpentry work with one of his brothers in 1909. Elias joined the Good Templar Lodge and was active in it for ten years; he also belonged to Young People's Society and was a member of Sons of Norway for over fifty years. He met his wife, Karen Peterson, at the lodge, and they married in 1915; they lived in Portland and did not have any children. Elias attends a Lutheran church and has visited Norway several times; in October 1911, he went home for Christmas and stayed about six months, and he went again with his wife in 1920. He visited a third time in 1961, after his wife's death, and again in 1968.

Lineage

Full Name: Elias Larsen. Father: Lars Andreasen. Mother: Rasmina Eliassen. Brothers and Sisters: Andreas Larsen, Nikolai Larsen, Martin Larsen, Gina Larsen, Sofia Larsen, Rasjofil Larsen, Johannes Larsen, Elias Larsen. Spouse: Karen Peterson.

Content Description

The interview was conducted with Elias Larsen on August 27, 1981 in Portland, Oregon. This interview contains information on family history, family farm in Norway, emigration of family, school days in Norway, work in Norway, reasons for emigrating, voyage to America, work in the U.S., language problems, community involvement, lumber industry, marriage, medical care, Christmas traditions, visits to Norway, Norwegian language and heritage, childhood in Norway, and reflections on immigration. Also available are a photograph of Elias Larsen and an article from the Western Viking (April 29, 1983). The interview was conducted in English.

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 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	
	011: PERSONAL BACKGROUND Name is Elias Larsen. Born on May 7, 1888 in the country near Ålesund which is near the Kristiansund and Molde on the west coast.
84, side 1	054: PARENTS Father was Lars Andreassen. Mother was Rasmina Eliassen. They were born in 1849 and were confirmed in the same church and later married at age 20. Had six brothers and two sisters all born between 1870 and 1888.
84, side 1	114: THE FAMILY FARM Two cows, eight sheep, and one pig. To make money his father fished.
84, side 1	133: BROTHERS AND SISTERS Andreas, Nikolai, Martin, Gina, Sofia, Rasjofil, Johannes and Elias.
84, side 1	146: FAMILY HOME When he came to America he sent money home to have it remodeled. Only one that got to stay home until he was confirmed.
84, side 1	170: EMIGRATION OF FAMILY First brother left in 1903. Martin in 1903. Johannes in 1904. Sofia in 1905 and Elias in 1906. The first sent a ticket to the second.
84, side 1	190: SCHOOL DAYS Elias' brother in the U.S. sent him money so that he could get a better education. Went through regular school for seven years. Went to Ålesund for six months to go to school. Came on a Tuesday and that weekend the entire

Container(s)	Description
	town burned down. This was 23 January 1904. Got a job working at a store as an errand boy there. Hard to find housing so the principal rented a house for the students. Took arithmetic, penmanship, bookkeeping, and business letters.
84, side 1	270: WORKED IN A GROCERY STORE One of the biggest stores. Worked there until he came to the U.S. Worked only for board and room, no wages.
84, side 1	280: REASONS FOR EMIGRATION Couldn't make any money. Mother hated to see her fifth child to go because she didn't know if she would see them again.
84, side 1	285: TRAVEL TO THE U.S. Got money for the ticket from his brother. Left Ålesund on the 7th of August 1906. Remembers standing on the deck watching the mountains disappear and wondering if he would ever see them again. Went to Hull, England and took the train to Liverpool where they stayed for 2-3 days. Remembers a man who could speak to all the emigrants, kind of a guide. Came into Boston and took a train to Portland where he arrived September 1st after 24 days.
84, side 1	340: FINDING A JOB Came on a Friday, Monday was Labor Day and he had a job that day and worked up until the time that he retired.
84, side 1	350: GRANDPARENTS Doesn't remember them.
84, side 1	365: REASONS FOR EMIGRATION Couldn't make a living in Norway. Three brothers here already. Only brought a handbag with him.
84, side 1	380: ARRIVAL PORTLAND No one was there to meet him. Had a policeman help him.
84, side 1	400: BROTHERS' OCCUPATION One was a carpenter, one worked for the Portland Lumber Co., and the other worked there too. Talks about transporting timbers at this time, used trucks. Sister worked as a maid.
84, side 1	430: LANGUAGE PROBLEMS Didn't speak any English. Just had to pick it up the best he could.
84, side 1	444: WORK Started working at the mill and stayed there for about a year. Then he started working at the Southern Pacific train shed. In 1909 he started doing carpentry

Container(s)	Description
	work. His brother was the foreman. This brother started his own business in 1911. Built homes.
84, side 1	461: ORGANIZATIONS Joined the Good Templar Lodge and was active in it for ten years. Joined young peoples' societies which they had for Lutherans, the Methodists, and the Free Church. Was pretty busy, liked the people.
84, side 1	477: CITIZENSHIP Got it later on.
84, side 1	484: MARRIAGE Got married in 1915. Met his wife at the lodge, Karen Peterson. No children. Lived in Portland.
84, side 1	495: HOME Built it in 1913, bought the lot in 1907 for \$500 at \$10 a month.
84, side 1	505: MEDICAL CARE In Norway, old people were taken care of by the state. Now you are taken care of from the time you are born until the time you die. At 67 you get a pension and are well taken care of.
84, side 1	530: CHRISTMAS In Norway it is just a family affair, here they have lots of parties. Sometimes they would have a tree. Mother would kit woolens. Slaughtered a pig. Favorite Norwegian food is lefse. Raised on fish and potatoes.
84, side 1	568: CHURCH LIFE Goes to a Lutheran church but has never belonged to a church.
84, side 1	570: ORGANIZATIONS Belongs to Sons of Norway, Good Templar Lodge, and Young People's Society. Talks about the Good Templar Lodge.
84, side 1	600: VISITS TO NORWAY October 1911 went home for Christmas and stayed for six months. Had told his mother that if all went well he would be back in five years. Came pretty near to being on the Titanic when it came back, but decided to stay a little longer to witness a baptism. He had brought his tickets but changed them to the next trip on the Titanic. Donna Mallonee mentions that her grandmother also missed this run of the Titanic because the tickets got there four days too late.
84, side 1	633: SHIP BACK TO THE U.S.

Container(s)	Description
	16 immigrant boys and girls became very good friends with on the trip back because they had so many questions about the U.S. They had a big 24th birthday party for him on the ship.
84, side 1	647: Keeps in touch with his nieces and their children in Norway.
84, side 1	653: VISITS TO NORWAY Went in 1920 with his wife. Norway was much the same as when he had been there before. Went again in 1961 after his wife's death. This time his school friends were grandparents. Then he took another trip in 1968. Has been home four times. The family here in the U.S. is very close.
84, side 1	678: IMPORTANCE OF NORWEGIAN HERITAGE Has been an important part in just a regular way. Has been a member of the Sons of Norway for over 50 years.
84, side 1	690: NORWEGIAN TRADITIONS Didn't keep any particular traditions.
84, side 1	700: USE OF NORWEGIAN LANGUAGE Still speaks it. Other relatives here are all gone.
84, side 1	710: SPOKEN NORWEGIAN Says two Norwegian poems. The first talks about remembering your youth and the friends that you had and wonderful feeling it gives you. The second is about how young people try to do the best for their friends.
84, side 1	780: CHILDHOOD IN NORWAY He was the only one who got to stay home until he was 15 years of. All the rest had to leave as soon as they were old enough to make their own living at age 10 or 11.
84, side 1	795: REFLECTIONS ON IMMIGRATION Glad he came. There is no place like America. It's been good to him. Hasn't suffered here. Never had any trouble with the law.

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Christmas--Norway

Education--Norway

Emigration and immigration

Family--Norway

Norway -- Social conditions -- 1945

Norwegian-Americans -- Ethnic identity
Norwegian-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Interviews
Norwegian-Americans--Social life and customs
Ocean travel

Personal Names :

Larsen, Elias--Interviews
(creator)
Peterson, Karen
Andreasen, Lars
Eliassen, Rasmina

Corporate Names :

Good Templars, Independent Order of (Portland, Or.)
Sons of Norway (U.S.) Grieg Lodge No. 15 (Portland Or.)
Southern Pacific Railroad Company

Family Names :

Andreasen family
Eliassen family
Larsen family
Peterson family

Geographical Names :

Ålesund (Norway)
Kristiansund (Norway)
Molde (Norway)
Portland (Or.)

Form or Genre Terms :

Oral histories

Occupations :

Carpenters
Farmers
Sawmill workers

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