Overview of the Collection

Creator  Fredricksen, Fredrick
Title  Fredrick Fredricksen Oral History Interview
Dates  1982 (inclusive)
       1982 1982
Quantity  2 file folders
       1 sound cassette
Collection Number  t169
Summary  An oral history interview with Fredrick Fredricksen, 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

Frederick Fredericksen was born on September 29, 1889 in Gudbrandsdalen, Norway to Anders Gustaf Fredericksen and Ragnhild Pladsen. At this time, a system of sharecropping existed in Norway, and large farms were divided into smaller pieces on which the sharecroppers lived. The sharecroppers had to turn over everything they produced except what they need to live. Frederick's father had a place called Gustaf and his mother had a place called Pladsen. The Faukstad family, whom Frederick describes as "unethical people," owned Pladsen. The Faukstad's often impregnated the young girls, and the farm became so over-populated that they started shipping people to America. As the area grew in size, Frederick's family decided to immigrate to America on their own accord.

Frederick's father went to America and worked on railroad construction. When he was established, he returned to Norway to marry Ragnhild. Anders then returned to America before Frederick was born and settled in western Washington. Frederick and Ragnhild joined him when Frederick was ten months old. The family, along with many other Norwegians, settled in Poulsbo, WA. There, Frederick's younger sister Elmo was born. The family always spoke Norwegian in their home, and Frederick did not begin to
learn English until he started school at the age of eight. He graduated from a school in Tacoma in 1904 and then went to a Lutheran college in Everett for two years.

After college, he got a job at a sawmill in Seattle and then became employed at the Kitsap County Co-op. A friend, C.F. Richards, later talked him into buying a recreation center in Waterville, WA with him, but Frederick did not like it there and eventually returned to Poulsbo. The day after he returned, he left for Alaska with his father and brother. He had intended to go fishing with them, but as they were traveling to Valdez, the boat stopped in Cordova and Frederick ran into some friends who invited him to stay in Cordova and play baseball with them. Frederick had played baseball with them in Poulsbo and decided to stay. The team's manager found a job for him at a local department store. This was in 1917, and Frederick remained in Alaska until 1939. Before coming to Alaska, Frederick had dated an actress named Eunice, and when she wrote to him in 1937, he returned to Washington and married her.

Eunice, however, did not like Alaska, and in 1939, they bought a hardware store in Eatonville, WA. The hardware store did rather well, but when the war started, Frederick was asked to return to work in Alaska. Although he regrets the decision now, he went back to Alaska, and Eunice went to stay with her mother in Los Angeles. Shortly after the move, Eunice fell ill and only lived for another six months. After Eunice passed away, Frederick became an auditor for the Army Engineers and then worked as a traveling salesman for fifteen years. Frederick never returned to Norway, but continued to write to a cousin there and was a charter member of the Sons of Norway in Poulsbo.

Lineage


Content Description

This interview was conducted with Frederick Fredericksen on May 10, 1982 in Poulsbo, WA. It contains information about family background, sharecropping in Norway, emigration, school, work, marriage, and Norwegian heritage. 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


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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cassette</td>
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<tr>
<td>169, side 1</td>
<td>012: Frederick Fredericksen. His grandfather's name was Frederick Gustafsen. Frederick's father changed his name to Fredericksen. He was born on September 29, 1889 in Gudbrandsdalen, Norway. Gudbrandsdalen is in the interior of Norway. It's a farming area. Many Norwegians from this part of Norway settled in the Poulsbo area. The piece of land that Frederick lived on was homesteaded by Steinar Thorsen (?) in 1879. He has a copy of the first minutes from the meeting, which organized the first Lutheran church in Poulsbo.</td>
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<td>169, side 1</td>
<td>122: PARENTS</td>
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Fredrick Fredericksen Oral History Interview, 1982
http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv63615
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anders Gustaf Fredericksen and Ragnhild Pladsen. Anders worked on railroad construction. Things were tough in Norway, over population, so they came to America. After getting established, Anders went back to Norway and married Ragnhild, Frederick’s mother. Frederick’s father went back to America before Frederick was born. He settled in western Washington because it was the finest country he’d seen while he was working on the railroad across the United States. He subcontracted for James J. Hill, builder of the Great Northern Railways.</td>
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</table>
| 169, side 1  | 186: GRANDPARENTS  
He lived with them. He was 10 months old when he came to the U.S. His whole family came. 35 people from his community left at the same time. Not all of them settled in western Washington. He had an aunt in Iowa and an aunt in Minnesota. |
| 169, side 1  | 214: LIFE IN NORWAY BEFORE THEY LEFT FOR AMERICA  
There was a system of sharecropping in Norway in those days. Big farms were divided into smaller pieces where the sharecroppers lived. Frederick’s mother had a little place called Pladsen. Frederick Gustaf had another little place called Gustaf. They had to turn over all they produced except what they needed to live on. They were also servants. People who didn’t have work starved. Many worked on the railroad. Frederick’s father and uncle worked on the railroad in Norway and then went to the U.S.A. |
| 169, side 1  | 279: MOTHER’S FAMILY  
Small farmers. Pladsen was up on a mountainside. Faukstad’s owned the farm they sharecropped on. Unethical people. |
| 169, side 1  | 294: MOTHER’S FAMILY  
Faukstad’s would impregnate young people. The farm became overpopulated so they started shipping people to America. Gunnar Thorsen’s family sharecropped on this same farm. The Byre family came over in this way as well. They saved enough money to have the whole family come to America. |
| 169, side 1  | 338: PARENT’S HOUSE  
Barn and living quarters were in the same building. People had log houses then. They used square nails. |
| 169, side 1  | 398: CHRISTMAS  
They had very beautiful dances, Hallingdansen. They’d consume a lot of alcohol. They made punsch, alcohol, hot water, nutmeg, cinnamon, and a little butter. |
| 169, side 1  | 451: TRIP TO AMERICA  
Came to Quebec, Canada. Came into the U.S. through Detroit. Came on American railroads to Seattle. Had to stay in Seattle for a week. No regular boats running yet. Finally took the Augusta to Poulsbo. This boat was owned by |
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<tr>
<td>Megs, the owner of the Port Madison sawmill, the largest sawmill in the world at that time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>169, side 1</td>
<td>476: SETTLING IN POULSBORO Mother didn't speak English. His father and uncle bought 40 acres from Steinar Thorsen (?). Frederick's family stayed with a farmer who lived nearby while their house was being built. His mother really liked it in America.</td>
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<tr>
<td>169, side 1</td>
<td>529: BROTHERS AND SISTERS Frederick was the oldest child in his family. He had a sister, Elmo.</td>
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<td>169, side 1</td>
<td>534: GOING TO SCHOOL They always spoke Norwegian at home. Frederick didn't know yes or no in English when he started school at 8 years old. Didn't have any problems at school. A neighbor, Ellen Olson, &quot;took Frederick under her wing&quot; when they went to school. She was four years older. He graduated from a school in Tacoma in 1904. He went to college for two years at Nathaniel Lutheran College in Everett (1905-1906). He borrowed $130 from a man he had worked with in the woods.</td>
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<td>169, side 1</td>
<td>594: WORK Went to Seattle. Fredericks and Nelsons offered him a job. Pay was too little. $6.00 per week. A sawmill was being built not far from where he lives (near Poulsbo). He got a job there. He earned $2.00 per day when first started working there. Later got $2.75 per day. Worked from 7:00am to 6:00pm. He developed a bad cough from working in the sawmill so he had to quit.</td>
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<td>169, side 1</td>
<td>664: Got a job at Kitsap County Co-op. He lived at the Olympic Hotel in Poulsbo. He was the first to sound the fire alarm in 1914 when the hotel burned down. There was no fire department. They formed a bucket brigade. Practically the whole southern half of town burned. He worked at the Co-op for 4-5 years. They sold groceries, hardware, feed, etc.</td>
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<td>169, side 1</td>
<td>735: The first drugstore in Poulsbo was owned by J.V. Boyd. He sold it to C.F. Richards. Frederick knew this family. C.F. wanted to sell out. He was going to buy a recreation center in Waterville, Washington and he offered Frederick half interest. It was hot and dusty there. Lots of flies. Frederick didn't like it there. Mr. Richards bought him out for $800.</td>
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<td>169, side 1</td>
<td>797: A man from Coulee offered Frederick a place to homestead. Frederick didn't like the area. There were too many rattlesnakes. He went to the nearest train station. Came back to Poulsbo.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frederick's father and brother had been in Anchorage, Alaska working on the railroad. They were leaving for Alaska the day after Frederick got home. Frederick decided to go with them. He went to Valdez to work on the Ramsey (?) Goldmine. The boat left Seattle on a Saturday. Got to Valdez on a Friday. This was in 1917. The boat stopped in Cordova first. Frederick ran into some friends he'd played ball with at home. They wanted him to stay in Cordova and play on their team. The manager of the team got him a job at Esblom & Co., a big department store. Their baseball team was good. They challenged the Anchorage Allstars. Could play ball after 10:00pm. It was still light out.

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<tr>
<td>169, side 1</td>
<td>922: Cordova is a fishing town. They used to have a lot of razor clams. They don't have many now. They used clams for crab bait in the past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169, side 1</td>
<td>933: WIFE Stayed in Alaska until 1939. His wife didn't like it there. His wife was an actress. Went to school in Vancouver, B.C. He'd gone out with her before he went to Alaska. She had been married to an Englishman. He died during WWI. They started spending time together. The situation was tense so he went to Alaska. She wrote to him in 1937. He went to Washington and got married.</td>
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<td>169, side 1</td>
<td>979: HARDWARE STORE They stayed in Alaska for three years. She didn't like it. Too much rain and snow. He got a hardware store in Eatonville for $4,500. Seattle Hardware said they could get him something better in South Bend, Washington. The men who'd owned it had passed away. Their widows couldn't manage it. They didn't really like it there. They got the hardware store and a truck for $4,500. They stayed for two years. Then the war came.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169, side 1</td>
<td>1023: The people he'd worked for in Alaska called. Wanted him to come to Seattle. Said they wanted him to work in Alaska again. He did and has always regretted it. Business had been going good. They bought a car for $1,100 dollars. His wife drove her mother to Los Angeles. His wife also had a brother who was also a singer. Frederick's wife, Eunice got sick. Her mother sent Frederick a telegram. He came to Seattle. She lived for about six months after that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169, side 1</td>
<td>1067: Frederick didn't go back to Alaska. He got a job with the Army Engineers as an auditor. They liked his penmanship.</td>
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<td>169, side 1</td>
<td>1098: CHILDREN</td>
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<td>His wife had a daughter by her first marriage. She died about five years ago. She had two daughters. They each have about three boys. Frederick considers these to be his grandchildren.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 169, side 1 | 1105: NORWEGIAN ORGANIZATIONS  
Charter member of Sons of Norway in Poulsbo, Washington. Doesn't belong now. |
| 169, side 1 | 1111:  
Didn't know many Scandinavians in Alaska. Would help them if they happened to come into the store. |
| 169, side 1 | 1118:  
Hasn't gone back to Norway. Would like to though. He writes to a lady in Norway. |
| 169, side 1 | 1122: NORWEGIAN PEOPLE  
The finest people in the world. |
| 169, side 2 | SIDE II: |
| 169, side 2 | 012: CONTACT WITH NORWEGIAN RELATIVES  
Writes to a cousin. Her husband has passed away. She had a sister in Oslo. Her son is a merchant marine. Comes home about once a year. |
| 169, side 2 | 040: THE NORWEGIAN LANGUAGE  
Oslo used to be called Kristiania. The language in Norway has changed too. It's a disgrace. He went to a Norwegian school when he was young. Common school lasted for four months. The only textbooks they had in Norwegian were the Bible and catechism books. This school would last for six weeks or until the money ran out. |
| 169, side 2 | 122:  
He describes the fertile ground in Poulsbo. The biggest trees in Kitsap County grew in this area. They used to play on the big tree stumps when they were kids. He describes how some of the stumps were burned when clearing land. |
| 169, side 2 | 223: PAUL WAHL  
The first settler in Poulsbo. Came in the 1860s. Logging started in this area in the 1860s. Evidence of this can be found in Frederick's woods. |
| 169, side 2 | 332: LOGGING CAMPS  
One of Paul Wahl's early logging camps was not far from where Frederick lives. |
<p>| 169, side 2 | 341: TRESTLE BRIDGES |</p>
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<tr>
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<td>Paul Wahl built five of these bridges in the Poulsbo area. Frederick describes what a trestle bridge is. They used to play and fish on these bridges when Frederick was a youngster. They were never torn down. They just disintegrated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>169, side 2</td>
<td>368: He sings Norway's national anthem, &quot;Ja vi elsker dette landet.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>169, side 2</td>
<td>LOGGING METHODS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169, side 2</td>
<td>414: FULCRUM (See also II-122) The word he couldn't remember earlier. When clearing the land, the tree stumps were burned. The roots had to be pried out. The lever used to pry the root out was called a fulcrum. Logging methods in the U.S. were quite similar to those in Norway. Oxen were used for dragging logs out of the woods until 1883 when they started using horses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>169, side 2</td>
<td>455: Steinar Thorsen had the same birthday as Frederick. Would always invite Frederick over for coffee on his birthday. Frederick worked for him. He would pick cherries for him. Thorsen raised carrots that were 3 inches in diameter. He'd sell them to the cookhouse in Port Gamble. His cherry trees were tall. When Frederick picked cherries in those trees, he could see over the top of a two-story house.</td>
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<tr>
<td>169, side 2</td>
<td>498: Paul Wahl (?) homesteaded at what is now the Nova Ranch, about a mile from where Frederick lives. Adolf Husborg (?) also had one of the earlier homesteads. He had one of the first stores in Poulsbo. Ovan Berg (?) had the first store in Poulsbo. It was located where the old junior high is now. He'd have to go to Seattle once a week to pick up merchandise. He had a big sailboat.</td>
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<td>169, side 2</td>
<td>545: Andrew Moe started a railroad where the ferry landing is now. Andrew and Chris Moe bought a car in Seattle. Had it shipped to Port Gamble. Frederick remembers seeing them drive by. This was one of the first cars in Poulsbo.</td>
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<td>169, side 2</td>
<td>580: Andrew Young, who owned the Olympic Hotel (See also I-664), became a transfer man. He had a car. His son, Ronald, took a girl Frederick knew to a dance four miles from Poulsbo. She wanted Frederick to take her home. He wouldn't because Ronald had a car. Frederick had to walk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169, side 2</td>
<td>599: MOE'S RAILROAD</td>
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</table>
(See also II-545) Karlstad, a friend of Frederick’s had some old logging pictures. He wanted Frederick to identify the people. Thought they were from Moe’s camp but Frederick saw that they weren’t.

Names and Subjects

**Subject Terms:**
- Education -- United States
- Emigration and immigration
- Family--Norway
- Marriage service
- Norwegian-Americans--Ethnic identity
- Norwegian-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Interviews
- Norwegian-Americans--Social life and customs
- Sharecropping -- Denmark

**Personal Names:**
- Fredericksen, Frederick--Interviews (creator)
- Gustafsen, Frederick
- Wahl, Paul
- Fredericksen, Anders Gustaf
- Fredericksen, Elmo
- Fredericksen, Eunice
- Pladsen, Ragnhild
- Thorsen, Steinar

**Corporate Names:**
- Nathaniel Lutheran College (Everett, Wash.)
- Ramsey Gold Mine (Alaska)
- Sons of Norway (U.S.) Poulsbo Lodge No.44 (Poulsbo, Wash.)

**Family Names:**
- Fredericksen family
- Gustafsen family
- Pladsen family

**Geographical Names:**
- Cordova (Alaska)
- Eatonville (Wash.)
- Gudbrandsdalen (Norway)
- Poulsbo (Wash.)
- Seattle (Wash.)

**Form or Genre Terms:**
- Oral histories

**Occupations:**
- Auditors
- Railroads – Employees

Finding aid prepared by Kerstin Ringdahl and Amity Smetzler
2004