

Lars Thomas Nygaard Oral History Interview, 1982

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Nygaard, Lars Thomas
Title	Lars Thomas Nygaard Oral History Interview
Dates	1982 (inclusive) 1982 1982
Quantity	3 file folders 6 photographs 1 sound cassette
Collection Number	t158
Summary	An oral history interview with Lars Thomas Nygaard, 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

Lars Nygaard was born on July 17, 1901 in Tydal, Norway to Thomas Langmyr and Karena Nygaard. Lars was born on his mother's place, which is why he received her maiden name. He had five siblings: Einar, Inga, Henning, Torvald, and Tordis. Thomas was a carpenter, and the family lived on the same farm. Lars went to school in Tydal for eight years, after which he was confirmed and began working for his father. When he was 27 years old, he decided to immigrate to America. Einar, who had mined in Butte, Montana during the mid-1920s, advised him to do so. Before he left, Lars married Dagny Unsgaard, who was also from Tydal and two years older than him. Lars left Norway in November 1928, and it took nine days to reach Ellis Island. From there, he took the train to Middle River, Minnesota, where Karl Sagavold, the husband of Lars' mother's cousin, met him. Lars stayed with them until April and then went to Kevin, Montana, where his relatives in Minnesota had arranged carpentry work for him. After two years, Lars had earned enough money to send for Dagny and his daughter Inger, who was born several months after he left Norway. At this time, there was no more work for him in Montana, and he took his family to Minnesota and farmed for several years. In Minnesota, his second daughter,

Thelma, was born. When World War II started, Lars moved his family to Stanwood, WA, where his father's cousin, Tom Helmer, and Henning lived. In Stanwood, Lars found work in the shipyards. After living with Tom for one year, Lars bought a house in Freeborn, WA, where the family resided until 1963. During this time, Lars continued to do carpentry work, and built house in Alaska as well as Washington. Lars is a member of Freeborn Lutheran Church, where he helped build the parsonage and has served on the council. He has returned to Norway in 1952 and 1965 and still speaks Norwegian at home sometimes.

Lineage

Full Name: Lars Thomas Nygaard. Father: Thomas Lars Langmyr. Mother: Karena Nygaard. Paternal Grandfather: Lars Langmyr. Paternal Grandmother: Ingeborg Aaslian. Maternal Grandfather: Einar Erikson Nygaard. Maternal Grandmother: Berit Bakken. Brothers and Sisters: Einar Nygaard, Inga Kuraas, Henning Nygaard, Torvald Nygaard (died in infancy), Tordia Nygaard. Spouse: Dagny Bergitte Unsgaard. Children: Inger Nygaard Carr, Thelma Nygaard Schwarz.

Content Description

The interview was conducted with Lars Nygaard by his daughter, Inger Nygaard Carr on April 1, 1982 in Stanwood, Washington. It provides information on family background, emigration, work, marriage and family, and Norwegian heritage. The interview also contains photographs of Lars as a young man, Lars, his wife Dagny, and their daughters, and Lars and Dagny at the time of the interview. Also see Dagny Nygaard. 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 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

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	
158, side 1	018: Lars T. Nygaard. 'T' stood for Thomas, his father's name. Born in Tydal, Norway close to Trondheim on July 17, 1901.
158, side 1	066: PARENTS Karena and Thomas Nygaard. Lars was Thomas's middle name. Karena's maiden name was Nygaard. They moved to her place when they were married. Name was to be Langmyr. Father was a carpenter, lived on a small farm. Had some cows, goats, and sheep. No farming except for spuds and hay.
158, side 1	138: Parents were from Langmyr close to Nygaard.
158, side 1	153: GRANDPARENTS Lars Langmyr and Ingeborg. He was a carpenter and had a small farm. Maternal were Berit and Einar Nygaard.
158, side 1	185: BROTHERS AND SISTERS Einar went to Butte, Montana and did mining for 4-5 years. He was here in the mid-1920s. He took over the home place when he returned to Norway. Inga

Container(s)	Description
	stayed in Norway. She married Andrew Kuraas. He was a miner. Had a sister who died at age 6 of diphtheria. Olaf died when a baby. Henning did carpentry work in America. He went back to Norway, got married and his wife did not want to live in America.
158, side 1	305: CHILDHOOD HOME Good six, four bedrooms, a log house.
158, side 1	322: SCHOOL Went in Tydal for eight years. Confirmed in Tydal after school. Worked after school.
158, side 1	331: WORK Did carpentry work with his father. Stayed in Norway for 27 years.
158, side 1	347: REASON FOR EMIGRATING Decided to come to America because there was nothing to do in Norway. "It was poor times." Einar, his brother took over the home place. Einar had told him about America. Borrowed money for his ticket from people in Tydal.
158, side 1	404: MARRIAGE Married Dagny Unsgaard in Norway before he came to America. She was from Tydal. She was two years older.
158, side 1	430: Went to the U.S. in November 1928. Sailed on the Stavangerfjord. Took a train to Oslo.
158, side 1	449: TRIP OVER Nice, rough seas. Lots of people were sick but not Lars. Came over by himself. Met people on the boat. Took nine days to get to New York.
158, side 1	473: ELLIS ISLAND No trouble getting through. Had to have \$30 when he first came.
158, side 1	480: TRAIN TRIP Could not talk the language. Someone who knew the language helped him with talking. Had food on the train, also stopped for food.
158, side 1	515: Met in Middle River, Minnesota by Karl Sagsvold (?), who was married to Lars' mother's cousin. Lars stayed with them in their home. In April he went to Montana. Before he went to Montana he visited and helped with the chores.
158, side 1	548:

Container(s)	Description
	Went to Kevin, Montana close to the Canadian border. Had relatives in Minnesota that got him carpentry work here in Montana.
158, side 1	572: Paid by the hour. Depression was just starting. Lars had a lot of work for two years. Did some of it is Gatska (?), Minnesota during the winter.
158, side 1	594: America looked pretty good. Sent for his family in 1930. Took this long to earn enough money to send them over. No more work in Minnesota after 1930. Took family and got a small place where they had a few cows, chickens, and sheep. They had plenty to eat. They were sharing land with the owner. He got a percentage of what they raised on the farm. Did this for a few years. Farmed different places for this fellow.
158, side 1	668: LEFT FOR WASHINGTON The war started. Did shipyard work in Stanwood. Heard about this job though his dad's cousin and his brother Henning who was out in Stanwood. Henning came back to Minnesota and took over what Lars had done for the man on his farm.
158, side 1	699: Took the train out to Washington. Liked Washington, "it was just like Norway." The land is a lot like it is in Norway.
158, side 1	722: ALASKA Lived with Tom Helmer (?), his dad's cousin for one year. Bought a place in Freeborn and stayed there until 1963. Paid \$4,000 for the place in 1944. Wages were good in the shipyards. Made \$1.50 an hour. Made 25 cents per hour in Minnesota for carpentry work. Worked in the shipyards for two years. Has worked all over Washington and Alaska since he left the shipyards. Built houses for a contractor in Fairbanks, Alaska. Better wages. Did this for 4-5 months out of the year. Went with his brother and cousin from Minnesota.
158, side 1	808: They drove to Alaska on the highway. It was good in the winter because of the high snow banks in the side of the road.
158, side 1	834: Built barracks at the airport in Fairbanks. Have built houses in the Stanwood area for many years. Still doing some work.
158, side 1	850: LEARNING LANGUAGE Did not know anything when he came. Just picked it up. His boss in Montana only spoke English to Lars although he was Norwegian.

Container(s)	Description
158, side 1	870: CITIZENSHIP Minnesota in 1934. Had to be here for five years before he got his papers.
158, side 1	902: Worked mainly with Scandinavians. Worked with a little bit of every kind of people. Jews were working in Stanwood.
158, side 1	923: CHURCH Freeborn Lutheran Church. Done a lot of work there for the last 15 years of so. Helped build the parsonage. Was a member of the council.
158, side 1	946: SCANDINAVIAN ORGANIZATIONS Belonged for about a year and then quit. Still goes to some of the events. Group just as busy now as ever.
158, side 1	968: TRIPS BACK TO NORWAY Two trips in 1952 and 1965. Took the Stavangerfjord over the first time and flew the second time.
158, side 1	988: CHANGES IN NORWAY Everybody seems to be busy. Making more money then when they left. A lot more modern now.
158, side 1	999: Still speaks Norwegian at home sometimes. Still cooks rissengryngrøt. Had lutefisk on Christmas Eve in Tydal also had rissengryngrøt and lefse.
158, side 1	1024: CHRISTMAS DAY Had ribs and everything else along with it. Had a tree and presents.
158, side 1	1053: CHILDREN They have two children. Inger married Bill Carr. He is a teacher and they live in Parkland, Washington. They have seven children. Thelma married Roy Schwarz. He is a medical teacher in Denver, Colorado. They have two children.
158, side 1	1077: Speaks Norwegian briefly.

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Education--Norway

Emigration and immigration

Family--Norway

Marriage service
Naturalization
Norway--Social conditions--1945-
Norwegian-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Interviews
Norwegian-Americans--Social life and customs
Ocean travel
Railroad travel

Personal Names :

Nygaard, Lars--Interviews
(creator)
Aaslian, Ingeborg
Bakken, Berit
Carr, Inger Nygaard
Helmer, Tom
Langmyr, Lars
Nygaard, Dagny Unsgaard
Schwarz, Thelma Nygaard
Langmyr, Thomas
Nygaard, Einar
Nygaard, Karena

Corporate Names :

Freeborn Lutheran Church (Stanwood, Wash.)
Stavangerfjord (Steamship)

Family Names :

Aaslian family
Carr family
Langmyr family
Nygaard family
Schwarz family
Unsgaard family

Geographical Names :

Freeborn (Wash.)
Kevin (Mont.)
Middle River (Minn.)
Stanwood (Wash.)
Tydal (Norway)

Form or Genre Terms :

Oral histories

Occupations :

Carpenters
Farmers
Stevedores

Finding aid prepared by Kerstin Ringdahl and Amity Smetzler
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