

Hilma Tolonen Salvon Oral History Interview, 1981

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Salvon, Hilma Tolonen
Title	Hilma Tolonen Salvon Oral History Interview
Dates	1981 (inclusive) 1981 1981
Quantity	2 file folders 1 sound cassette
Collection Number	t070
Summary	An oral history interview with Hilma Tolonen Salvon, a Finnish 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

Hilma Salvon was born in 1895 in Paltamo, Finland to Matti Tolonen and Else Vayrynen. Matti was a foreman for a Swedish and Finnish logging company, whose headquarters were in Rovaniemi. The family lived in Sinettä, a small village ten kilometers north of Rovaniemi. Hilma had four siblings: Matti, Kate, Paula, and Tanna. When Hilma was young, Finland belonged to Russia, which was ruled by Czar Nicolas II. All men in Finland were required to serve three years in the Finnish Army, and when Russia demanded that Finland send 10,000 trained men to Russia, a protest and strike occurred. Then, in 1905, the general governor over Finland from Russia was shot, which only increased the confusion in Finland. In order to escape the chaos, Hilma's father decided to immigrate to America when his cousin in Astoria, WA sent him a ticket. One year later, he sent for the rest of the family. The family rented a house in Astoria, and Hilma began school. She completed the eighth grade, after which she got a job at a local department store. While working in the store, Hilma met her husband, Jalver Salvon, who was also from Finland. They were married in 1917 and had two children. Unfortunately, one child died in infancy and other at war in the South Pacific. Both Hilma and Jalver belonged to the Evangelical Congregational Church, and Jalver was also a member of the Finnish Brotherhood. Hilma enjoys

Finnish cooking and tries to keep up with the language. She had returned to Finland once, during which she learned a great deal about the Finnish social security system, medicare system, farming, and school systems. During the trip, Hilma was also impressed with how warmly she and Jalver were received.

Lineage

Full Name: Hilma Tolonen Salvon. Maiden Name: Tolonen. Father: Matti Tolonen. Mother: Else Vayrynen. Brothers and Sisters: Matti Tolonen, Kate Tolonen, Paula Tolonen, Tanna Tolonen. Spouse: Jalver Salvon.

Content Description

This interview was conducted with Hilma Salvon on July 16, 1981 in Astoria, Oregon. It provides information on family background, emigration, schooling, marriage, and Finnish heritage.

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	
70, side 1	022: HILMA TOLONEN SALVON Born in Paltamo, Finland in 1895. Paltamo is in northern Finland, south of Lapland. If you were in Oulu, you'd take a train to Kajaani, an inland city and then another train to Paltamo. When Hilma lived there, 90% of the people lived off the land in some way.
70, side 1	124: Many were small farmers. A couple of cows, a horse, and some sheep. Only one big farm in the area. Owned by Kajaani Paper Mill. They had 125 dairy cows. Exported cheese. All of Hilma's family in Finland have some land, several cows, and a horse. They still live off the land.
70, side 1	174: PARENTS Mother - Else Vayrynen. Father - Matti Tolonen. They never had a farm. Didn't even own a house. Father was from Ristijärvi.
70, side 1	212: Hilma and her husband spent 4 months in Finland. Traveled and studied Finland during the summer. Went to Ristijärvi. Her father's home had been near the church.
70, side 1	232: When he was young, his family sent him to a trade school in Oulu for 3 years. Finland has some of the best trade schools in the world. Started in 1888, Father learned many things.
70, side 1	281: LOGGING

Container(s)	Description
	Timber is chief export of Finland. Father worked for a Swedish and Finnish logging outfit in Lapland. Headquarters were in Rovaniemi, a town by the Arctic Circle.
70, side 1	320: He was a foreman for the Kemi Tukki Yhtiö. They fell the timber in northern Lapland. Floated logs down Ounasjoki (River) to Rovaniemi. Floated logs from Rovaniemi to Kemi on the Kemijoki (River). At this point, the Swedes and the Finns each took their share of the logs. Hilma's father was foreman for this company for 10 years. This was 1895-1905. The family stayed in Sinettä, a little village 10 kilometers north of Rovaniemi, while their father was in the woods. They rented a cottage there.
70, side 1	380: BROTHERS AND SISTERS Brother's name was Matti. Sister's names were Kate (She lives in Seaside, Ore. Widow. Retired school teacher.), Paula, and the youngest, Tanna, a boy of 9 months when they came to the US in 1906.
70, side 1	400: She describes the house they rented in Sinettä. Log cabin. Red with white trim. Cozy.
70, side 1	434: FINNISH FOOD They never got used to white bread in the US. Her mother used to bake a rye bread in Finland and when they came here. Hilma used to bake it. She gets it from a Finnish baker in Astoria now. Stew with different kinds of meat. Salt pork, cook it with onions and make gravy.
70, side 1	467: Her mother made good pancakes. They'd pick lingonberries and freeze them. In the winter, her mother would cook the berries in water and sugar and thicken them with potato flour.
70, side 1	489: CELEBRATIONS Juhannuspäivä or Midsummer is a big holiday in Finland. When Hilma and her husband were in Finland, they were near the Arctic Circle for Midsummer.
70, side 1	516: They saw the midnight sun. As a child they cut birch branches and put them in the yard. They'd have coffee and pastry out in the yard.
70, side 1	526: CHRISTMAS Didn't have a tree. Their father wasn't home. Made trimmings out of colored paper. No gifts. Never heard of Santa Claus. People were poor.
70, side 1	543: RELATIVES

Container(s)	Description
	Paternal - Had some addresses from her mother of relatives in Finland. Went to Ristijärvi where her father was born.
70, side 1	582: Met relatives who'd taken care of her grandfather's sister. The man had been a schoolteacher. The woman had been a nurse.
70, side 1	603: Speaks of other relatives they met.
70, side 1	657: Talks about Finnish massages. She met a masseuse in northern Finland who gave President Kekkonen massages when he went on skiing trips in the north.
70, side 1	674: GRANDPARENTS Paternal - When in Ristijärvi, asked if they knew her grandfather's name and where the house was. It was near the church. Her great-grandfather had been a choirmaster. Describes the place where the house had been.
70, side 1	710: EMIGRATION Her father had worked only as a foreman for that logging company. It was mandatory that every man serve 3 years in the Finnish Army. Finland belonged to Russia then. Russia demanded that Finland send 10,000 trained men to Russia. Nicholas II was tzar at that time. Finland refused. Protest. Strike in Finland. Everything stopped. A man named Schauman shot the general governor over Finland from Russia in 1905.
70, side 1	806: A lot of confusion in Finland. Hilma's father left for America in 1905. Escaped the confusion by leaving. He had a cousin in Astoria who sent him a ticket. Hilma and her family moved into a house with another family. They stayed there for one year. 1906 the family joined their father in Astoria. Father got a job from one of the 3 Kankonen(?) brothers. The youngest Kankonen was an architect. They were building St. Mary's Hospital at that time. They were involved in much of the building of Astoria.
70, side 1	901: After he'd saved enough money, he sent for the rest of the family. Trip over: Bedding, clothing, photographs were taken along. They left from Hanko (Hangö in Swedish), a seaport in Finland. The name of the ship was Polaris. It took them to Liverpool. They had to wait a week for the boat which would take them across the Atlantic. Left from Hull, England. She described the boat trip. Her family didn't get seasick.
70, side 1	960:

Container(s)	Description
	Only Finnish people on the Polaris. Many nationalities on the boat across the Atlantic. People who worked in the kitchen on the boat had dark hair and big teeth.
70, side 1	1004: SHOPPING IN LIVERPOOL Finnish speaking Jews owned shops there. Bought a coat for the baby. A skirt for Hilma.
70, side 1	1032: ARRIVAL IN AMERICA Their ticket was to New York. Should have gone through Ellis Island, which is near Staten Island. Somehow they were put on a Canadian ship. Came to Quebec. Put on the train. No problems. Nobody went through their bags. Their eyes were checked. Everyone had to be vaccinated. Compulsory in Finland to be vaccinated. Other groups, such as the Italians, vaccinated on the trip.
70, side 1	1073: Put on the train in Niagara Falls. Couldn't get off the train. Went to Chicago. They were given food on the train. Stopped in St. Louis (possibly) Everyone who'd been on the ship taken to a big building. Pads on floor to sleep on. People vaccinated. Many nationalities. Spent the night there.
70, side 2	33: TRIP TO WEST COAST Remembers seeing billboards and advertisements painted on buildings. Saw a bunch of pumpkins. Didn't know what they were. Could get some dried American fruit - pruned, apricots, and raisins in Finland.
70, side 2	130: Took the train to Kalama, WA. Train put on a big barge. Took them down the Columbia River to Goble on the Oregon side. No railroad from Kalama to Portland or from Portland to Goble.
70, side 2	168: Took train from Goble to Astoria. Father met them at the train station.
70, side 2	190: Father had a room with a family. Lots of rooms in this house. He ate at a boarding house nearby. Lots of boardinghouses in Astoria. Many single men and single women came to Astoria. Hilma and her family stayed in the house her father was living in.
70, side 2	210: Hilma started school in Astoria. Couldn't speak much English. No problems in school. Many Finnish people there.
70, side 2	281:

Container(s)	Description
	Rented a house in Astoria. It had 2 bedrooms, a living rooms, dining room, and kitchen. Her father was working on a hospital.
70, side 2	301: Felt at home. Her family was there. Started school right away., Neighbor had 5 girls. Mrs. Kertola(?) took Hilma to school her first day because Hilma couldn't speak any English. This lady is still living. Lives in Brownsmead, Oregon.
70, side 2	332: Met her husband in Astoria. He was from Finland too. Hilma got a job in a department store after she finished the 8th grade. Hilma ate there too. He shopped at the department store. They got married in 1917. Married for 63 years. Had 2 children. 1 died in infancy. The other died at war in the South Pacific. He'd just graduated from high school.
70, side 2	375: Tells about husband coming to the US. Chaos in Finland in early 1900's. His parents were a young couple. Mother had twins, Jalver and the girl. Mother's sister took Jalver. He was 9 months old. Came to Astoria, Ore. when father was out of military. Located in Seaside, Oregon. Father, mother, sister came in 1900. Jalver and aunt came in 1902.
70, side 2	456: FINNISH ORGANIZATIONS Husband belonged to Finnish Brotherhood for 66 years. Belonged to a Finnish church - Evangelical Congregational Church. Both Hilma and her husband were confirmed in that church. The Finnish Lutheran Church was established in Astoria 97 years ago (81).
70, side 2	508: Hilma's church isn't quite that old. Lutheran church had connections with Finland's State Church. In the beginning, the ministers had to come from Finland. The use of the Finnish language at the church has decreased. The old Finnish church and the old Swedish church are now consolidated into Peace Lutheran Church.
70, side 2	590: FINNISH IN THE HOME Husband was forgetting. Hilma has kept up with the language. Reads newspapers and books. Many Finnish people in Astoria. Many businesses used to require that employees speak Finnish because many people couldn't speak English.
70, side 2	614: FINNISH TRADITIONS Likes Finnish cooking. Mother made rye bread. Now gets it from bakery in Astoria.
70, side 2	638: IMPORTANCE OF FINNISH

Container(s)	Description
	Proud of heritage. Likes Finland's culture. No illiteracy in Finland. Very resourceful people. Whatever they do, they do well. Everything clean and orderly.
70, side 2	674: TRIP TO FINLAND She and her husband traveled in Finland from June to September. Visited relatives some but stayed in traveler's inns and motels. Short summer in Finland. Learned a lot about Finland.
70, side 2	699: Says a prayer in Finnish.
70, side 2	747: Glad she and her family came here. Her family wouldn't have had the opportunity to get a good education in Finland. Her father had a good job in Finland. They got along all right but the Russians caused a lot of chaos. Father was glad to leave when his cousin sent a ticket to America. Parents liked it in America. Northern Finland was so cold.
70, side 2	770: Hilma lives America, but they were treated very well when they traveled to Finland. Learned a lot about social security systems, medi-care system, and farming and school system. Things our school system could learn from the Finnish school system.
70, side 2	811: Good connections for traveling and learning about Finland. Finnish people love their flag. Friend put his flag up for them at summer cabin.
70, side 2	784: Describes a grade school they visited in Rovaniemi, which is near the Arctic Circle. Tells about friends they met in Rovaniemi.
70, side 2	823: Each school has an apartment in the school building. A friend of theirs, who'd adopted a war orphan. Lived at this school in Rovaniemi. 1500 pupils there. Explained about the school system. School lunches free for Finnish pupils. Put up the Finnish flag for the guests.
70, side 2	878: Talks about friends she visited in Astoria, had a luncheon. Mrs. Bjork (?) was there. Had thought about going to Finland. Hilma called a friend of hers in Helsinki when she and her husband got there. He took them to visit a general from the war days. They put up their Finnish flag for America guests. He gave them a quart of whiskey. When they came home, they served the Finnish whiskey in little jiggers to their friends.

Container(s)	Description
70, side 2	956: Sister in Portland. Her husband has an uncle in Oulu, Finland. Oulu is called the "white city." Well educated man. Gave her a copy of geography book he wrote.

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Education -- Finland
 Emigration and immigration
 Family--Finland
 Finnish -Americans -- Ethnic identity
 Finnish-Americans--Northwest,Pacific--Interviews
 Finnish-Americans--Social life and customs
 Ocean travel
 Railroad travel

Personal Names :

Salvon, Hilma--Interviews
 (creator)
 Salvon, Jalver
 Tolonen, Matti
 Vayrynen, Else

Corporate Names :

Finnish Brotherhood (Astoria, Or.)
 Peace Lutheran Church (Astoria, Or.)
 Polaris (Ship)

Family Names :

Salvon family
 Tolonen family
 Vayrynen family

Geographical Names :

Astoria (Or.)
 Paltamo (Finland)

Form or Genre Terms :

Oral histories

Occupations :

Loggers

Finding aid prepared by Kerstin Ringdahl and Amity Smetzler
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