

Erik Wilhelm Molund Oral History Interview, 1983

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Molund, Erik Wilhelm
Title	Erik Wilhelm Molund Oral History Interview
Dates	1983 (inclusive) 1983 1983
Quantity	3 file folders 6 photographs 2 sound cassettes
Collection Number	t230-231
Summary	An oral history interview with Erik Wilhelm Molund, a Swedish 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

Erik Wilhelm Molund was born on April 12, 1892 in Vedby, Sweden. Erik's mother Hannah passed away right after he was born, and his father Aron remarried the woman who raised Erik, Hilda Davidson. The family lived on a small farm; Erik's father worked as a tailor. Erik attended school during the winter from January to June. He had one older brother named Eskil, two stepbrothers, and two half-brothers. Eskil moved to America and encouraged Erik to join him. Erik left Sweden in 1911 at the age of 17, and he lived with Eskil in Texas working on their uncle's farm. They both found extra work as janitors. Eskil stayed in Texas for three to four years, but Erik stayed for only two. Then Erik found a variety of jobs and traveled to many different places like Kansas, North Dakota, Minnesota, and finally back to Texas. In 1922, Erik went home to Sweden to marry Elsa Nilsson. They both returned to America and lived in Iowa a short time before moving to Tacoma, Washington. Erik worked in a shipyard and then in construction; he was close to 70 when he retired. Erik and Elsie took a trip to Sweden in 1957. They are active in the Scandinavian Vasa Lodge and are involved in their church.

Lineage

Full Name: Erik Wilhelm Molund. Father: Aron Molund. Mother: Hannah Molund. Step-Mother: Hilda Davidson. Paternal Grandfather: Anders Andersson. Brothers and Sisters: Eskil Molund. Half-Brothers: Knut Molund, Gustav Molund. Step-Brothers Erik Davidson, David Davidson. Spouse: Elsa Anna Maria Nilsson. Children: Elmer William Molund, Inga Marie Molund, Dorothy Bernice Molund.

Content Description

The interview was conducted with Erik Molund on February 28, 1983 in Tacoma, Washington. This interview contains information on personal background, emigration, employment, return trips to Sweden, marriage, travel, adjustment, heritage, and church life. Also available are photographs of Erik Molund's family home in Sweden, Erik and two of his brothers, Erik and his wife Elsa as a young couple, and Erik and Elsa at the time of the interview. The interview was conducted in English with some Swedish throughout the interview. Also see Elsa Molund.

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

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	
230, side 1	015: Erik Wilhelm Molund was born in Vedby, Förlösa, Kalmar Län, Sweden on April 11, 1892 (Family tree indicates birth date of April 12).
230, side 1	076: PARENTS Aron and Hannah Molund. Mother passed away right after Erik was born. Stepmother, Hilda Davidsson raised him. Erik's parents were both from the Förlösa area.
230, side 1	120: GRANDPARENTS Doesn't remember them. He was quite young when they passed away. Paternal grandfather's name was Anders Andersson.
230, side 1	154: FAMILY NAME Erik's father didn't want the name Andersson so he and his brothers took the name Molund. The name came from the place where they were born. Molund means a place with lots of trees.
230, side 1	208: FATHER'S OCCUPATION He was a tailor. Had a little shop where he sewed. Had a machine for sewing long seams. Did a lot of sewing by hand. Sewed a lot of overcoats lined with sheepskin. Worked day and night, didn't sleep much.
230, side 1	259: CHILDHOOD Lived on a small farm. Had a cow, a pig or two, some chickens. Father took care of the animals. Gave him a chance to exercise. He did this in the evening. He'd have to turn on the kerosene lamp in the evening when it got dark. All they had for light was a big kerosene lamp hanging from the ceiling. Father would have to carry wood to the house in the evening too. Step-mother was a seamstress. Sewed women's clothing. She would have the children take out the basting stitches when she was finished with a piece of clothing.

Container(s)	Description
230, side 1	<p>331: BROTHERS AND SISTERS</p> <p>Older brother, Eskil. Two step-brothers. His step-mother had two boys before she married Erik's father. She and Erik's father had two children together. One of these died of the measles when he was 7 years old. Step-mother's boys were names Erik and David. Erik's half-brothers names were Knute and Gusta. Gusta is the one who died of the measles. Eskil came to America. He was living in Iowa when Erik came to America. He worked at the Guggenheim (?) copper mine on Latouche Island in Alaska. Erik tells about Eskil's marriage and the death of Eskil's wife and child. Wife died of appendicitis while pregnant. Eskil stayed in Tacoma for a couple of years after that. Then he went back to Alaska. Was in Juneau. Went to the dentist. Found out he had gangrene in his mouth. Died in three days.</p>
230, side 1	<p>529: CHILDHOOD</p> <p>(See also I-259) Went to school. Always had to go to the store to get thread and other sewing supplies. Had to walk one Swedish mile (10 kilometers). A long ways to walk with a big bag of groceries. Got dark early in the winter. Sometimes had to walk in snow. Would get home about 8pm.</p>
230, side 1	<p>589: WORK</p> <p>Got a job watching cows when 11 years old. There were three families with one cow each. They ran loose in the summer. He stayed with the people he worked for. Did this for three summers.</p>
230, side 1	<p>614: SCHOOL</p> <p>Stayed at home and went to school in the winter. School started in January and ended in June. Coldest time of the year. Made the kids walk in the snow. Kids didn't have very good shoes. People were poor. His parents made enough money to feed to family.</p>
230, side 1	<p>646: CHRISTMAS</p> <p>Got mostly homemade presents. Couldn't afford to buy much. Got stockings, gloves, and scarves. Would usually butcher a pig for Christmas. Would have "dopp I grytan." Cooked the head of the hog. Dipped rye bread in the juice. Did this on Christmas Eve. Had rice and lutfisk for Christmas. Sometimes had "dopp is grytan" for New Years Eve too.</p>
230, side 1	<p>710: WORK</p> <p>(See also I-589) Got too big for watching cows when he became 13. Got another job on a farm. That was the year before he got confirmed. Made his own living driving horses and plowing. They gave him a couple hours off once or twice a week so he could go to the classes at the pastor's. Had to start taking care of himself at an early age because there wasn't room for everybody at home. The young ones were getting bigger. The house had two rooms and a kitchen. The kids slept in the shop. On the farm, had to get up at 4am to feed the horses. Had to be out in the fields by 7am. Got dark at 3pm in the winter.</p>

Container(s)	Description
230, side 1	<p>810: IMMIGRATION TO AMERICA</p> <p>Eskil went to America when he was 18 years old. He went to an uncle's place just outside of Austin, Texas. After he'd been in the U.S. for a year, he sent a ticket to Erik. Erik left home in 1911, at the age of 17. It was exciting to come. Sweden didn't have the fruit stores with bananas and fruit from California and Florida like the U.S. did. Had to have \$25 to go through Ellis Island. Had to have a physical examination. Things weren't very good in Sweden so father understood why he left.</p>
230, side 1	<p>876: TRIP TO AMERICA</p> <p>Left home on New Years Day 1911. Took the train to Göteborg (Gothenburg). Traveled by boat across the North Sea to Liverpool, England. Took three days. Passengers slept on deck on the floor. Took Cunard Line's "Lusitania" from England to New York. Was traveling alone, but met many Norwegians and Swedes on the boat. Many Europeans on the boat. Had to stay one night in England. "Lusitania" was too big to come in at low tide. Smaller boats took them out to the ship. 2000 people on the ship.</p>
230, side 1	<p>955: ARRIVAL TO NEW YORK</p> <p>Had to get vaccinated first day, even though he had already been vaccinated. Was going to Texas. Made arrangements to travel by ship to Savannah, Georgia. Took a train from there to Texas.</p>
230, side 1	<p>976: TRIP ACROSS THE ATLANTIC</p> <p>Took about six days to cross the ocean. Service and dining on the "Lusitania" wasn't like it was in later years. The dining room was similar to those in logging camps. Long tables and tin plates. Tables had holes to hold the plates in place. Late, the dining room was operated in the same manner as a restaurant.</p>
230, side 1	<p>1008: FIRST IMPRESSION OF NEW YORK</p> <p>Saw the Statute of Liberty first. Had to go through Ellis Island where they gave you a "hej på dej" and let you in or sent you home. Many were sent home.</p>
230, side 1	<p>1030: TEXAS</p> <p>Went to his uncle's in Carrizo Springs. Didn't have problems on the train. Knew the name of different foods in English. Brother was to meet him at the train station. Some confusion here. Brother and man he worked for went to San Antonio to meet the train there. Erik missed them. Got a ticket that would take him to Carrizo Springs. Got to the town where his uncle lived in the evening. People welcomed him. They played the fiddle and sang. He saw cowboys, Mexicans, and Negroes. A man with a mule brought him to his uncle's place, 3 or 4 miles out of town. Got there at 11pm. Everybody was asleep. (Tape ends abruptly).</p>
230, side 2	033:

Container(s)	Description
	<p>Uncle gave him a dipper of water on the front porch. Showed him his bed, Erik slept in late the next morning. His brother still hadn't returned from San Antonio.</p>
230, side 2	<p>088: UNCLE'S FARM Uncle, Alfred Molund had a cotton farm 16 miles south of Austin, Texas. Erik's father had three brothers, Olav, the eldest, was a tailor in Sweden. One came to America. The other went to Stockholm and opened a brewery. They would sell beer on the streets in those days. Erik and Eskil worked in the cotton fields during Erik's first spring in the U.S. They plowed fields. Used 2-6 mules. It got hot in Texas, but he got used to it. Blood get thinner because of the climate. Lost weight because he sweated so much when he was working.</p>
230, side 2	<p>244: LEARNING ENGLISH Learned English while in Texas. Learned some Spanish as well because he worked with so many Mexicans. Mexicans worked hard but they got mad quick.</p>
230, side 2	<p>264: FARMING In 1914 went to O'lidea (?) on the Gulf of Mexico. Rented 100 acres. Had four mules. Normally cotton was sold at 16-20 cents per pound. In 1914, it was sold for 3-4 cents per pound. Had to pay the pickers. The black pickers were good workers. They could pick a bale a day. A bale of lint and seed weighed about 1500 pounds. They earned about 60 cents per 100 pounds. Erik couldn't make a profit on the farm. Had to get a janitor job in Ft. Worth (\$ 30 a month plus room and board) to pay off his debts. Did this in six months. He had rented the land. For every four bales, Erik only got one.</p>
230, side 2	<p>426: FT. WORTH, TEXAS Brother, Eskil worked as a janitor for an attorney in Ft. Worth. Erik got a job there too. The attorney had a cow, a horse, and some sheep. Had a big apartment house. Erik could make \$20-25 per month extra by cleaning tenants apartments. Also cut grass and did yard work at the Lutheran church in Ft. Worth. Eskil stayed there for 3-4 years. Erik stayed only for two years.</p>
230, side 2	<p>517: MOVE TO THE NORTH Was still single. Had paid his debts. Decided to move north towards Wisconsin with the harvest. Took a train from Texas to Kansas. Went to a Swedish church in (?), Kansas, near Kansas City. He met a Swedish farmer at the church. Got a job stacking wheat. Erik was comfortable with this work. Had done the same work at home. Earned \$5 per day. The farmer wanted Erik to stay for the winter.</p>
230, side 2	<p>622: Erik wanted to move along north with the harvest. Went to North Dakota. Stayed for a couple of months. Worked for a farmer who had a thresher and moved from farm to farm. When it started to get cold in North Dakota, Erik went to Minnesota to dig potatoes. Got a job but didn't say for more than a few days.</p>

Container(s)	Description
	Didn't like the work. Went to Minneapolis/St. Paul with a friend. Got a job in the woods in Wisconsin through a firm in St. Paul. Stayed for the winter.
230, side 2	687: Moved back to Texas. Brother was still there. Got a job. Stayed for a year. Erik and his brother went to Iowa. Got jobs digging tunnels for irrigation pipes. Engineers mapped out where the tunnels would go. Iowa has many lakes like Minnesota. They dug tunnels towards the water. Tunnels were so big that one could walk in them. About 12 guys would work together. They slept in tents. Took over a year for them to finish this contract. Made pretty good money.
230, side 2	766: TRIP TO SWEDEN Went home to get married in 1922. Erik and Eskil had 1918 and 1920 Fords. Erik wanted to take his car to Sweden but he would have had to take it apart to ship it there. Talks about driving in the countryside in Iowa after they came back from Sweden.
230, side 2	848: MARRIAGE Came home to Sweden on December 15. Called Elsa in Stockholm. Erik's parents were still living. Stayed with them over Christmas. Erik picked Elsa up in Stockholm after Christmas. Stayed in Stockholm for a month. They got married on April 22. Had to see the Swedish consulate before he could get married because he'd been out the country for so long. They asked if he'd been married before.
230, side 2	976: MOVE BACK TO THE U.S. Went back to Iowa. They had friends they wanted to see on the West Coast. Drove to Minneapolis. Erik sold his car there. Came to the West Coast by train that fall. (For more details see Elsa Molund's interview t229).
230, side 2	1004: TACOMA, WASHINGTON Worked in Todd Shipyard. When the shipyard closed he got a job doing construction work. First job was building the Veteran's Hospital on American Lake. Worked on many schools in the Tacoma area. 1930, joined the Cement (?) Union. Union pays for medicine he needs and 20 percent of his doctor's bills. Erik was close to 70 when he retired.
230, side 2	1123: TRIPS TO SWEDEN (See also II-766) Erik and his wife went to Sweden in 1957. Many changes. A lot more cars. People drive everywhere. Roads have been straightened and paved. They stayed in Sweden for three months.
231, side 1	007: IWW: Erik tells about the IWW's who traveled in boxcars on freight trains. They traveled mostly in the grain producing states. Erik traveled this way when he followed the harvest from Kansas City to North Dakota. (See also Tape 230 II-517 and II-622) The IWW's were like a union. They would throw those who

Container(s)	Description
	weren't members off of the train. All members had red membership cards. One could join in Omaha, Nebraska.
231, side 1	091: CHURCH Erik belonged to a church in Ft. Worth. Has always belonged to a church. Had held offices. Was deacon. Has taken the collection for 10-12 years. Was instrumental in helping the church get its debt paid off.
231, side 1	154: SWEDISH ORGANIZATIONS Belongs to Vasa Lodge. He has never held an office but his wife has.
231, side 1	175: SPEAKS SWEDISH
231, side 1	239: ARCHIVES Talks about the archives in the big cathedrals like in Uppsala, Sweden.

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Education -- Sweden
 Emigration and immigration
 Family -- Sweden
 Marriage service
 Ocean travel
 Sweden -- Social conditions -- 1945
 Swedish-Americans --Social life and customs
 Swedish-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Interviews

Personal Names :

Molund, Dorothy Bernice
 Molund, Elsa Anna Maria
 Molund, Erik Wilhelm --Interviews
 (creator)
 Molund, Eskil
 Andersson, Anders
 Davidsson, Hilda
 Molund, Aron
 Molund, Elmer William
 Molund, Hannah
 Molund, Inga Maria

Corporate Names :

Lusitania (Steamship)

Family Names :

Andersson family
 Davidsson family
 Molund family
 Nilsson family

Geographical Names :

Öland (Sweden)

Resmo (Sweden)

Tacoma (Wash.)

Vedby (Sweden)

Form or Genre Terms :

Oral histories

Occupations :

Construction workers

Farmers

Janitors

Finding aid prepared by Kerstin Ringdahl and Amity Smetzler
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