Johanne Knudsen Oral History Interview, 1982

Overview of the Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creator</th>
<th>Knudsen, Johanne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Johanne Knudsen Oral History Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>1982 (inclusive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1982 1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>3 file folders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 photographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 sound cassette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection Number</td>
<td>t201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>An oral history interview with Johanne Knudsen, a Danish immigrant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repository</td>
<td>Pacific Lutheran University, Archives and Special Collections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Archives and Special Collections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pacific Lutheran University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12180 Park Avenue South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tacoma, Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>98447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Telephone: 253-535-7586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fax: 253-535-7315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:archives@plu.edu">archives@plu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access Restrictions</td>
<td>The oral history collection is open to all users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Reference</td>
<td>Guides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor</td>
<td>Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Biographical Note

Johanne Knudsen was born on August 28, 1900 in Tvis, Jutland, Denmark to Ole Jensen and Ane Katherine Nielsen. Her father drove a team of horses and hauled things for people, and her mother was a seamstress. Johanne had eight siblings and was the next to youngest in the family. Johanne was confirmed when she was fourteen and then got a job as a house assistant. She gave up this job when she married Jorgen Knudsen on May 21, 1925. In an effort to find work, Jorgen went to New Brunswick, Canada on March 21, 1927, and Johanne joined him the following November. They lived in Grand Falls, New Brunswick for six months and then bought a farm beyond a Danish settlement known as New Denmark. They remained at this farm for ten years and had two children, Else and Bob. The family left New Brunswick in order to help Johanne's sister Anna in Saxon, WA. Anna and her husband were getting too old to run their own farm and thought Johanne and Jorgen could help them out. Johanne and Jorgen rented the farm and went through some very tough years, clearing the land and making the farm productive again. Eventually, Jorgen wanted to learn another trade and began attending Western Washington State College in Bellingham. He became a first class welder and got a job in at the Everett shipyards. While Jorgen worked in Everett, Johanne and the children decided to remain at the farm. Johanne loved living on the farm and stayed there for twenty-six years. Johanne has made several trips
back to Denmark and continues to keep in touch with her friends there. She never had time to join any
Scandinavian organizations, but is a member of Faith Lutheran Church and the grange in Saxon.

Lineage

Full Name: Johanne Knudsen. Maiden Name: Johanne Jensen. Father: Ole Jensen. Mother: Ane
Grandmother: Anna (?). Brothers and Sisters: Anna Lintz, Jens Jensen, Oline Kathrine Rasmussen,
Mathilde Bodil Clausen, Niels Peter Jensen, Wilhelm Jensen, Marie Kristine Jensen. Spouse: Jorgen

Content Description

This interview was conducted with Johanne Knudsen on October 26, 1982 in Bellingham, Washington.
It provides information on family background, emigration, marriage and family, farming, and Danish
heritage. The interview also includes a photograph of Johanne in 1958 and two of her in 1982, wearing
the same traditional outfit as in the 1958 photograph. 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 Cindy Klein 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cassette</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201, side 1</td>
<td>016: Johanne Knudsen. Born in Tvis, Denmark on August 28, 1900.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201, side 1</td>
<td>030: PARENTS Ole Jensen and Ane Kathrine. Father left every morning with a team of horses and hauled things for people. He sold things as well. Didn't usually make over night trips. Mother was a seamstress as well as a homemaker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201, side 1</td>
<td>077: BROTHERS AND SISTERS Nine children in the family. Johanne is next to the youngest. Anna, Jens, Oline, Mathilde, Niels, Wilhelm, Johanne, and Marie.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201, side 1</td>
<td>102: GRANDPARENTS Maternal, remembers grandmother. Johanne remembers playing with her dolls at her grandmother's home, while her grandmother weaved. Paternal - grandfather was a salesman. He always bought things for the children. Wilhelm and Johanne loved to walk to their grandparent's house, which was 10 kilometers from their home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201, side 1</td>
<td>147: BROTHERS AND SISTERS (See also I-077) Ann emigrated to the US in 1911. Lived in Saxon, Washington. Passed away in 1982. Johanne came to her place when she came to the US. Johanne and Marie are the only ones in their family still living.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201, side 1</td>
<td>166: CHILDHOOD HOME</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A little village. The school was close by. The teachers had a hard time keeping Johanne home when she was still too young to go to school. They finally told her mother that she might as well start school. Four teachers. The village was very nice. There was a railway station too. Johanne's parents were poor. They had lost everything by buying their farm. Johanne was born at this farm in Tvis. Her sisters and brothers were all born in Hjerm. Her father left the farm after five years and got his job in Hjerm back. Johanne grew up in a nice home in Hjerm.

201, side 1

266: CELEBRATIONS
Remembers her sisters' weddings. Celebrated for a couple of days. Johanne, who got married after WWI (1925), didn't get that kind of wedding. Their honeymoon was spent working in a turnip field. Planned on being a housewife. They both had to work.

201, side 1

337: MARRIAGE
Married in Hjerm on May 21, 1925. Johanne had given up her job as a house assistant. She had started this type of work at age 14. Her husband was out looking for work.

201, side 1

367: CONFIRMATION
Common for children to be out on their own after they were confirmed at 14 years of age. Johanne had a job where she could still live at her parent's home for the first year and a half after she was confirmed. Boys would sometimes be on their own when 9 years old.

201, side 1

387: MARRIAGE
(See also I-337) Johanne got work washing and cleaning. Her husband looked everywhere for work. Decided to sell fish. Rode around the county on his bicycle selling fish. Would could home with the fish he hadn't sold and the whole neighborhood would eat fish. Didn't do this work for very long. Her husband went to Canada on March 21, 1927, looking for work. Johanne worked all summer and her husband helped to pay for her ticket. He was quite enthused about life in Canada.

201, side 1

462: TRIP TO AMERICA
Left on a boat from Copenhagen on November 2, 1927. Sailed to England. Took one of Cunard Line's ships to America. Johanne was with two other girls. Took the boat from Southampton, England. One lady was in bed for the entire journey. Not Johanne and her friends. They met four Swedes. Had a lot of fun. Sailed to France. Picked up more passengers and then sailed to Quebec, Canada.

201, side 1

504: ARRIVAL
After they got off the boat and entered the halls, they were instructed to put down their suitcase. They noticed that the girl who had been sick was missing. All passengers had been given ribbons of various colors. Each color meant
something. The missing girl's ribbon meant she should be taken to the hospital at once. Johanne had a hard time finding her suitcase after she said good-bye to her friends. Because of this she missed her train to New Brunswick. She stayed at a YWCA in Quebec, and a lady there took her to the train station the next day.

Johanne couldn't speak much English. Was put on the wrong train. Ended up in New Castle, New Brunswick. Went back to Moncton, New Brunswick. A Danish lady at the YWCA got her on the right train to Grand Falls, New Brunswick.

She'd sent her husband telegrams from every place she'd stopped. They hadn't seen each other since March. She gave him a big hug and kiss.

They stayed in Grand Falls for half a year. Bought a farm way out in the sticks, beyond a Danish settlement. Stayed there for 10 years, clearing land. Children grew up there. Bob was 4 when they left and Else was 7. Her husband had worked in a power plant and on farms before Johanne came over. Thought he would make a lot of money growing potatoes on their farm. The problem was that they had to clear the land first. New Denmark, New Brunswick was on old settlement. They were new immigrants. Many Danish immigrants in the area. They had one neighbor nearby. Cold winters with lots of snow. Men worked on the roads in the winter. Tried to raise their own food, make their own furniture, etc.

Johanne's sister and brother-in-law in Saxon, WA, were getting too old to run their farm. Anna thought maybe they could help each other. Johanne would have rather gone back to Denmark. Her husband thought it would be best to go to the West Coast.

Johanne, her husband, and two children traveled by train to Mission City, British Columbia. They spent the night in Edmonton, Alberta went through Calgary, Alberta, and rode in the caboose from Mission City to Sumas, Washington. Her sister met them there and then took them to her farm in Saxon, Washington.

The farm in Saxon was almost lost. Johanne's husband was a very good farmer. Johanne drove a tractor on this farm. In Canada, she had always driven a team of horses.
Drove a team of horses everywhere. Took the kids into the settlement for vacation Bible school one time with the neighbor another Danish lady. Bob was too young for Bible school so Johanne fixed a place in the wagon for him to sleep. He didn't want to sleep, he wanted to drive. Tells about driving with horse and sled in the snow to the settlement's general store. Worried about bobcats when she went by herself.

They tried to make the most of their own things. Bought flour, beans, and meat. One year they had only $12 in cash. She used it to buy underwear. People helped those having a hard time. The Frenchmen would bring them buckwheat. Anybody could make it if they had buckwheat and buttermilk. (See also I-652)

(See also I-749) Rented her sister's farm. Wanted most of all to get their citizenship papers. Were just about ready to this in Canada when her sister wrote, asking them to come to the US. There were only two openings left for Danes to come into the US. They barely got into the US. Came to Saxon and "started working like troopers." Had to clear a lot of land. Tough years. Her husband wanted to learn to do something else. The government was sending teachers to the colleges to learn welding and such. He went to school at Western Washington State College in Bellingham everyday. Came home every night. Became a first class welder. They had a lot of cows, a bull, and four horses to take care of as well. He got a job as a welder in a shipyard in Everett, Washington.

(See also I-850) January 1943 got their citizenship papers. They had gone to a school in order to become a citizen. There were many people without citizenship papers. This was a problem when the war started up, so many school sprang up.

Husband went to work in Everett, Washington. Johanne and the kids decided to stay in the farm. They liked Mt. Baker. They helped their mother on the farm. They stayed on this farm for 26 years.

Bought another farm, which was a block away from the old one. There weren't many Danes in the area. Many Norwegians.

Began studying English at home, but didn't know enough to get along. Learned to understand quite a lot. Learned a lot of English from a 3 year old girl she babysat in Grand Falls, New Brunswick. Johanne's husband had to learn because of his work. After they moved to New Denmark, they spoke a lot more Danish. Wasn't good for their English.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container(s)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 201, side 1 | **1030: CHILDREN**  
Else was born in 1930 and Bob was born in 1933. Neither speaks Danish now. Else and Johanne were in Denmark in 1971. Johanne thought that Else would pick up Danish again but she didn't. |
| 201, side 1 | **1040: TRIPS BACK TO DENMARK**  
Johanne and her husband went back in 1958. Stayed six weeks. Her husband died in 1969. Else said to Johanne that she and Bob didn't know their family in Denmark. Else wanted to make a trip to Denmark. Bob is the only one who hasn't been to Denmark. |
| 201, side 2 | **141: CHANGES IN DENMARK**  
Enjoyed seeing friends and relatives. Planned on renting a place to stay, but they had a lot of family who would not allow them to do anything for themselves. Rented a car. The trips were very interesting. Met someone from Minnesota. Husband started speaking to a Danish bus driver in English. Johanne told him to speak Danish but the bus driver said he wanted to learn English. |
| 201, side 2 | **226: DANES VISITING THE U.S.**  
One of Johanne's girlfriend has visited her twice. Came alone once and with her husband once. They had a son who got married in California. He lives in Germany now. |
| 201, side 2 | **252: CHILDREN**  
(See also I-1030) Else has been the secretary for the Garden Street Methodist Church in Bellingham for 17 years. Bob is superintendent of the identification bureau at the police station in Bellingham. |
| 201, side 2 | **273:**  
Johanne has six grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren. Talks about them. Phyllis went to Denmark while in the Air Force. She was stationed in Turkey at the time. |
| 201, side 2 | **334: SCANDINAVIAN ORGANIZATIONS**  
Has never had time to join. Her husband was sick for a long time. Does know some Danish people in town. It was the Danish bakers that got Johanne and Else in on the trip to Denmark in 1972. They saved a lot of money on that trip. Belongs to Faith Lutheran Church. Has been more active than she is now. |
| 201, side 2 | **359:**  
Loved living on the farm. Her husband worked on the farm when he came home at night, but during the day it was hers. Her kids were always helpful. She was active in the church in Saxon. Her husband belonged to the grange there. She still does, but she's not an active member. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container(s)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 201, side 2 | 402: CANADA  
(See also I-652, I-820) Poor times when they were in New Brunswick. They had school in their area but couldn’t afford to pay the teacher much. They offered room and board to the teacher. One girl who taught there comes to visit Johanne almost every year. There was a table prayer they always said while she lived with them before 1937. The last time she visited Johanne she asked if Johanne could say it. Johanne was surprised that she still remembered it. Johanne says some prayers in Danish. Her grandchildren always like to hear the table prayer: I Jesus navn til bords vi gaar. |
| 201, side 2 | 475:  
Learned to quilt in America. Learned to knit mittens in Canada. Learned to knit stockings in Denmark. Had to learn to sew. The pastor at the Danish settlement helped them get a cow and a horse. |
| 201, side 2 | 535:  
Had a one room school at the Danish settlement in Canada. They had the teacher stay with them quite often because they had an extra room. The only thing she didn’t like out there was the bedbugs. Tells how they would get rid of them. |
| 201, side 2 | 576:  
Danish tradition to have a raising party when building. They built a barn. Tradition to put a wreath and flag on top and have a big party. |
| 201, side 2 | 609: CONTACT WITH FRIENDS IN CANADA  
Gets a letter from one friend once every years. She has moved into the city now. She has a daughter the same age as Else. Edith Kveld (?), the school teacher came to visit in the summer of 1982. (See also II-402) She remarked how much she admired Mrs. Knudsen for always managing something on the table. They had cows, pigs, and chickens. The chickens were friendly. There were a lot of French-Canadians in the area. They got along fine with each other. |

Names and Subjects

**Subject Terms:**
- Confirmation
- Danish-Americans--Interviews
- Danish-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Social life and customs
- Education -- Denmark
- Emigration and immigration
- Marriage service
- Naturalization
- Ocean travel

**Personal Names:**
Johanne Knudsen Oral History Interview, 1982
http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv83793
Knudsen, Johanne--Interviews
(creator)
Knudsen, Else
Knudsen, Jorgen
Lintz, Anna (sister)
Nielsen, Ane Katherine
Jensen, Ole
Knudsen, Bob

Corporate Names :
Faith Lutheran Church (Bellingham, Wash.)

Family Names :
Jensen family
Knudsen family
Nielsen family
Olsen family

Geographical Names :
New Denmark (N.B.)
Tvis (Denmark)

Form or Genre Terms :
Oral histories

Occupations :
Domestics
Farmers

Finding aid prepared by Kerstin Ringdahl and Amity Smetzler
2004