

# Einer Nielsen Oral History Interview, 1982

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Creator</b>	Nielsen, Einer
<b>Title</b>	Einer Nielsen Oral History Interview
<b>Dates</b>	1982 (inclusive) 1982 1982
<b>Quantity</b>	3 file folders 2 photographs 1 sound cassette
<b>Collection Number</b>	t189
<b>Summary</b>	An oral history interview with Einer Nielsen, a Danish immigrant.
<b>Repository</b>	<a href="#">Pacific Lutheran University, Archives and Special Collections</a> Archives and Special Collections Pacific Lutheran University 12180 Park Avenue South Tacoma, Washington 98447 Telephone: 253-535-7586 Fax: 253-535-7315 <a href="mailto:archives@plu.edu">archives@plu.edu</a>
<b>Access Restrictions</b>	The oral history collection is open to all users.
<b>Additional Reference Guides</b>	
<b>Languages</b>	English
<b>Sponsor</b>	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

---

## Biographical Note

Einer Nielsen was born on February 14, 1897 in Henne, Denmark to Sern Christian Brun and Anna Nielsen. Einer's parents were farmers, raising some grain and potatoes, and Sern also worked part-time for a house-builder. Einer was the youngest of eight children, all of which immigrated to America except the eldest two. After Einer was confirmed, he began working on local farms but did not see a future for himself in Denmark. In 1914, he decided to immigrate with two other boys who were going to homestead in Canada. They took the Lusitania to Ellis Island and from there, took the train to Toronto, Ontario. In Toronto, they met a man who arranged for them to do farm work in Tavistock, Ontario. Einer farmed until the crops were in and then went to live with his brother in Seattle, WA. His brother owned a boarding house, and Einer got a room there. He worked shoveling snow and filling bakery orders for the drivers. Einer's brother Viktor, who was also selling bakery goods, wanted to farm and convinced Einer to join him. They began working on a 1700-acre farm, where they lassoed wild cows, milked them, and made butter. They had four cows, which gave them enough to live on, but soon found a farm more suitable for dairy farming in Roy, WA. After working with Viktor for awhile, Einer went to Alaska, where his brother Kris had a bunkhouse near a mine. Einer's job was to keep water out of the mine when the tides came in. Eventually, Einer returned to Seattle and went into the milk business with his brother-in-law. Around 1921, Einer returned to Denmark and brought back Hilda Dungaar, whom he had known

from grade school. They were married in Seattle and had two children, Viktor and Esther (Temple). Einer continued with the milk industry and built a Danish brick house for his family. When he retired, he moved into an apartment complex and met his second wife, Helen Bogardis, who was born in Seattle.

## Lineage

Full Name: Einer Marinus Nielsen. Father: Sern Christian Brun. Mother: Anna Nielsen. Brothers and Sisters: Martin Nielsen, Matilda Nielsen, Sigfrid Nielsen, Kris Nielsen, Viktor Nielsen, Margrethe Nielsen, Edith Hansen. Spouse: Hilda Dungaar, Helen Bogardis. Children: Viktor, Esther Temple.

## Content Description

This interview was conducted with Einer Nielsen on October 6, 1982 at the Norse Home in Seattle, Washington. It provides information on family background, emigration, occupations, and marriage and family. The interview also includes two photographs of Einer at the time of the interview. The interview was conducted in English with some Danish towards the end of the interview.

## 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	
	023: PERSONAL BACKGROUND: Name - Einer Marinus Nielsen. Born in Henne, Denmark, which is on the west coast near Varde on February 14, 1897.
	080: PARENTS: His father was known as Sern Christian Brun. Brun was an old family name. Einer was called the Burn's son. He's not sure where Nielsen came from, but it was his mother's name. Her name was Anna. They were farmers and he worked part time for a house builder. They raised some grain and potatoes. His father worked out quite a bit and might stay where he was working.
	158: BROTHERS AND SISTERS: Martin was a farmer and stayed in Denmark as did Matilda. Sigfrid was in this country for many years and worked as a sewer contractor in Seattle, Washington. He got some arthritis and got a boarding house where workers from Alaska would come to stay for the winter. They would always pay even if they didn't have the money at the time. After this he went into the apartment house business. Following Sigfrid to the US came Kris, Viktor, Margrethe, and Edith who married a farmer in Snohomish, Washington. Kris went to Alaska, worked in a mine and later started raising foxes. He fed the foxes with the fish he caught. Viktor was a farmer between Enumclaw and Tacoma. He died young from Bright's disease. Margrethe married a farmer in Seattle. Edith married Chris Hansen.
	360: GRANDPARENTS: Had met his paternal grandparents Brun.

Container(s)	Description
	370: CHRISTMAS IN DENMARK: They always had a tree and decorated it. They ate either rabbit or ducks or geese with red cabbage. They made their own bread, pumpernickel.
	424: SCHOOL IN DENMARK: It took about 25 minutes to walk and/or run there.
	430: CONFIRMATION: Went to the minister with four girls. They met with the pastor on Saturday. They had to go about three Danish miles.
	458: CHURCH IN DENMARK: They didn't always go because it was too far to walk and they didn't have horses.
	470: FARM WORK: That was all there was to do. He lived with the people he worked for. They would hire out for a year. After one year he went to another place where he stayed until he came to America. They wouldn't let him go because his time wasn't up.
	505: REASONS FOR COMING TO AMERICA: His brothers and sisters were here and doing well. Most thought they would go to America and make some money and come back and buy a place. It was a loss for the parents to lose their children. He promised his parents that he would try to save and come back, but no one ever came back. Einer did come back to visit.
	545: PREPARING FOR THE U.S. TRIP: He didn't have enough money to come and he never asked his brother because they didn't want him to come because they wanted the youngest to stay home with the family. He couldn't see any future in Denmark. This was the start of WWI.
	570: TRIP TO US: He got the money from the grocery man that he was working for in his spare time. He borrowed 300-400 Dkr. They left from Copenhagen and went to England. This was in 1914. They didn't know when they would leave England in the Lusitania because they were afraid of the U-boats. They were ordered to sleep in their clothes and come on call. There was a battle ship that escorted them out. This ship was sunk on the way back. There were movies and dances on board. He came with two other boys that were going to homestead in Canada. They were supposed to go to Canada but they couldn't land because of the war so they came to New York. The trip took about ten

Container(s)	Description
	days from England to New York. They had waited several days in England and waited in a boarding house. The food was bad.
	695: TRIP FROM COPENHAGEN, DENMARK TO LONDON, ENGLAND: They were in a small boat and it was rough and he was sick.
	705: LUSITANIA: The food was good and he wasn't sick.
	712: ELLIS ISLAND: They had to go through but they didn't have enough money. \$5 was required so Einer went through first and handed the money back to the next guy to get through. They were going to send him back because the address that he said he was going to didn't exist. The ticket agent in Denmark made up the place. Some Danish people helped them explain that they were going to work on farms up there because they knew that farm help was needed.
	750: TRAIN TRAVEL: Took the train to Toronto, Canada. They bought food to take on the train.
	760: TORONTO, CANADA: There was lots of snow so they thought that they would go and stay with one boy's brother in Detroit, Michigan, but his brother refused him when they called from the border because he didn't know that his brother was coming and thought that it was someone playing a trick. The people at the border wouldn't even try to call Einer's brother after that, but sent them back to Toronto. When they got back they stayed at the RR station until it was time for them to close and a person came that took in travelers and took them to a boarding house.
	850: BOARDING HOUSE: The man gave them a nice room and fixed them a big breakfast. He helped was the dishes to pay for the food. This man took him to the Norwegian immigration man.
	877: IMMIGRATION MAN: He told them that the railway had to refund their ticket to the US because they didn't have the papers for passage. They got their money back. This man arranged for them to go to Tavistock, Ontario where there was a Danish man that could find them a job.
	915: Worked on farms until they got enough money to send the one guy to his brother. The third boy in their party couldn't land because he was engaged to

Container(s)	Description
	a German girl and they had to marry before he entry would be allowed. They never saw him again. His last name was Petersen.
	945: FARM WORK: Einer stayed at the farm. His friend repaid the money he had borrowed. Einer asked for a raise and got it. He stayed until the crops were in and then he was ready to head for Seattle. The farmer was German and spoke German so he had a hard time learning English.
	980: TRAIN TRAVEL: Knew enough English that he didn't have any trouble traveling. The trip took a couple of days. Other immigrants were cooking food on the pot-bellied stove on the train. He had contacted his brother and his brother met him at the train.
	1010: BROTHER: He had a boarding house at this time and he was also responsible for taking care of the Danish Brotherhood Hall. Einer helped him until he got settled himself.
	1025: SEATTLE, WASHINGTON: This was the year of the big snow. They got 4'. He worked shoveling snow because buildings weren't made for this much snow. Einer had a room in his brother's boarding house.
	1050: BAKERY WORK: He filled orders for the drivers that went out the next morning. This was a night job. His neighbor would play violin in the day when he was trying to sleep. He learned a lot the language there.
	1077: ENGLISH SCHOOL: Didn't learn more than conversational.
	1090: Brother Viktor was also selling bakery goods, but he got tired of it and wanted to farm. They went and worked on a 1700-acre farm. His brother wanted him to go into partnership with him. They lassoed wild cows and milked them and sold the butter.
	SIDE II:
	015: He continues talking about the wild cows and how they broke them. They used a separator to get the cream. They had about four cows and that was enough to live on.

Container(s)	Description
	070: ROY, WASHINGTON: They found a better farm that was suitable for dairy farming and that's what this brother had done before.
	095: ALASKA: His other brother went to Alaska and found a job for Einer too. The brother had a bunkhouse near a mine. When the tide was coming in it was Einer's job to keep the water out of the mine by means of a dyke and a wood powered pump.
	160: ENTERTAINMENT: Were dances every week. There weren't any white women there. There wasn't a lot to spend your money on.
	192: SEATTLE MILK BUSINESS: He bought out a man that had a milk route and a few cows. Einer's brother-in-law got the cows and Einer took the route. He delivered the milk in truck. The milk was in bottles.
	260: MEETING SPOUSE: They met in grade school in Denmark. She had become a nurse in Denmark. Her name was Hilda Dungaar (?). He had to go back to Denmark and get her in 1921 or '22. Had someone take his milk route. She came back with him.
	305: VISIT TO DENMARK: Visited old friends.
	315: WEDDING: Married in Seattle. His brother, Sigfrid, and his wife had the wedding for them. They had a dinner and a dance. They played tricks on him so that he couldn't get away in his car. They had a house to move into.
	380: TRIP: They took a trip with his brother and went and stayed in a cabin by the river.
	430: HOUSING: They lived in their first house until they decided that it would be better to move into town closer to his business. They rented there.
	450: KRISTOFERSON'S DAIRY: They were a large dairy with 30-40 delivery wagons. He got a job there and liked it, but had a chance to buy a route. The

Container(s)	Description
	previous owner was being sued for selling milk which carried undulant fever. He got the milk to sell from a farmer out in Renton Junction.
	530: CHILDREN: His wife stayed home after they were married. Viktor graduated from Washington State and was a teacher. They live in Springfield, Oregon. They have great grandchildren. Esther Temple (?) was a navy nurse and has now started an old people's home in Hawaii. Her husband worked for the government. They have four girls.
	620: APARTMENT HOUSES: Sold the milk route and the Danish brick house he had built and moved into the apartment houses where he stayed until he moved to where he is now.
	645: SECOND WIFE: She was one of his tenants. Her name was Helen Bogardis (?). She had been taking care of her old mother and her cancer ill brother who died within a week of each other. At this time he had sold the apartment but stayed on as its care taker. Helen was born on Capitol Hill in Seattle.
	715: VISITS TO DENMARK: Had a trip down through Europe with a Danish minister's tour. They went all the way to Italy. The old home is gone. Before his mother died she was living with her daughter who was a baker in Copenhagen.
	755: ORGANIZATIONS: He wasn't very active in the Danish Brotherhood because his wife didn't like the drinking. They were active in the Church.
	775: SPOKEN DANISH: He tells about his second trip to Denmark in Danish.

## Names and Subjects

### Subject Terms :

Danish-Americans--, Interviews

Danish-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Social life and customs

Emigration and immigration

Ocean travel

Railroad travel

### Personal Names :

Nielsen, Einer--Interviews

(creator)

Dungaar, Hilda



Nielsen, Anna  
Nielsen, Viktor  
Bogardis, Helen  
Brun, Sern Christian  
Temple, Esther

**Corporate Names :**

Lusitania (Steamship)

**Family Names :**

Bogardis family  
Brun family  
Dungar family  
Nielsen family

**Geographical Names :**

Henne (Denmark)  
Roy (Wash.)  
Seattle (Wash.)

**Form or Genre Terms :**

Oral histories

**Occupations :**

Farmers

Finding aid prepared by Kerstin Ringdahl and Amity Smetzler  
2004