

Agnes Johanna Dyrhaug Oral History Interview, 1982

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Dyrhaug, Agnes Johanna
Title	Agnes Johanna Dyrhaug Oral History Interview
Dates	1982 (inclusive) 1982 1982
Quantity	3 file folders 1 sound cassettes
Collection Number	t180
Summary	An oral history interview with Agnes Johanna Dyrhaug , 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

Agnes Dyrhaug was born on July 11, 1896 in Nord-Statland, Norway to Anton Peterson and Jette Krestine. Anton worked in a sawmill, and there were three other children in the family: Ole, Johan, and Wilhelmine. Agnes immigrated to America in 1905 with her mother, sister, two brothers, and an aunt. Her father had immigrated three and a half years earlier and lived in Astoria, OR, where he had originally come to fish and later became a carpenter. The World Fair was in Portland, OR the year Agnes and her family came, and due to the large number of travelers, the immigrant coaches of the train were left behind in Minnesota when the train got too long. After two weeks of travelling, they finally reached Astoria. In Astoria, Agnes's other siblings, Paul, Helen and Earl, were born, and the family bought a farm in nearby Napa, OR. Agnes attended school for eight years and also took a commercial course, after which she began bookkeeping for Haukes.

Agnes met her first husband, Marinus Berg, in Astoria and was married in 1917. Marinus was also of Norwegian descent and worked as a carpenter and a contractor. They continued to live in Astoria for five years and had two children, Maurice and Bonita (Foster), before moving to Portland. When

Marinus got sick, Agnes began managing apartments and later worked for the Portland Housing Authority. Marinus passed away in 1939, and Agnes later remarried Peter Dyrhaug. In Portland, Agnes attends Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and is a member of the Sons of Norway. She has also been a demonstrator for Nordic Ware and Chicago Cutlery, which involved demonstrating making Norwegian foods from Seattle to San Francisco, CA. Agnes has returned to Norway twice and believes that her Norwegian heritage is very important.

Lineage

IFull Name: Agnes Johanna Dyrhaug. Maiden Name in Norway: Agnes Johanna Ovesen. Maiden Name in the U.S.: Agnes Johanna Peterson. Father: Anton Peterson. Mother: Jette Krestine Pettersen. Paternal Grandfather: Ove Pettersen. Paternal Grandmother: Hannah Pettersen. Maternal Grandfather: Peter Pettersen. Maternal Grandmother: Indianna Pettersen. Brothers and Sisters: Ole P. Peterson, Johan H. Peterson, Wilhelmine C. Peterson, Paul A. Peterson, Helen O. Williams, Earl N. Peterson. Spouse: Marinus Berg, Peter H. Dyrhaug. Children: Maurice A. Berg, Bonita J. Foster.

Content Description

This interview was conducted with Agnes Dyrhaug on May 21, 1982 in Portland, Oregon. It contains information concerning family background, emigration, work, marriage and family, community activities, and Norwegian heritage. The interview also includes an article in Norwegian from the Western Viking concerning Agnes's eighty-fifth birthday and her nomination to Gerda Farestrand's committee on the Oregon Arts Commission. The article also gives an overview of Agnes's life, including emigration, schooling in Astoria, Washington, marriage, involvement in Scandinavian organizations, meeting Crown Prince Olav, and employment with Nordic Ware and Chicago Cutlery. 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 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	
180, side 1	018: NAME She lists her name, Agnes Johanna Ovesen Peterson Berg Dyrhaug. Ovesen was her maiden name when she was in Norway but it was changed to Peterson in the U.S because it was easier to spell. Dyrhaug means "animal hill." Her husband's name is Peter Larsen Dyrhaug.
180, side 1	080: PERSONAL BACKGROUND Born on July 11, 1896 in Nord-Statland, Norway which is between Namsos and Trondheim.
180, side 1	095: AREA OCCUPATIONS There was a sawmill, fishing, and farming.
180, side 1	100: PARENTS Both of her parents had the Peterson, Pettersen name. Her father worked in the sawmill.

Container(s)	Description
180, side 1	116: BROTHERS AND SISTERS Ole, Johan, Wilhelmine, and Agnes were born in Norway. Paul, Helen, and Earl were born in the U.S.
180, side 1	135: GRANDPARENTS She remembers her maternal grandmother could read, but she wasn't wealthy enough to learn to write. Paternal grandparents lived with them.
180, side 1	229: FAMILY HOUSE Downstairs there was the kitchen, living room, pantry and a bedroom. Upstairs there were three bedrooms. The house has since burned.
180, side 1	242: CHRISTMAS IN NORWAY She recalls the first Christmas her father was away. Her mother was a seamstress. For Christmas everyone got clothes and were bathed. For Christmas Eve they had rommegrøt, but it was so expensive that some would have rice pudding with a layer of the cream pudding on top. They had a Christmas tree, lefse, pastry.
180, side 1	328: 17TH OF MAY Parades with flags.
180, side 1	338: BUSINESS IN THE AREA They had two grocery stores and shipped out a lot of lumber. They also made prefabricated houses, which were shipped up north where wood was scarce. This was in 1903 or 1904. There were a lot of French and Spanish ships that came in to get wood for boxes.
180, side 1	384: SCHOOL IN NORWAY She went one year.
180, side 1	386: TO AMERICA She came in 1905 when she was nine. She came with her mother, sister, two brothers, and her aunt. Her father had been in the U.S. for three and a half years. He had come to fish in Astoria, Oregon. He later became a carpenter and also bought a farm in Napa (?), Oregon, which is near Astoria.
180, side 1	410: FEELINGS ON EMIGRATION She didn't want to come, but she was with her family so she didn't think too much about it. Her brothers couldn't wait to come. She heard lots of bad stories about America.
180, side 1	438: NEW YORK 1955 She ran into a lady who thought that the Indians were still running around with bows and arrows.

Container(s)	Description
180, side 1	<p>468: LUGGAGE</p> <p>Brought clothes and the going away gifts they got. The farm was sold. They weren't allowed to bring food.</p>
180, side 1	<p>500: SHIP TRAVEL</p> <p>They were treated like cattle. Eleven days to cross the ocean. Her father had sent the money for them to take second class passage, but her aunt decided they had to go third class. She tells about how she was almost blown off deck during a storm.</p>
180, side 1	<p>581: NEW YORK</p> <p>She saw the Statue of Liberty and Castlegarden, and got on the train on the same day.</p>
180, side 1	<p>597: TRAIN TRAVEL</p> <p>This was in August and the World's Fair was being held in Portland, Oregon that year so there were a lot of people traveling and when the train got too long their cars were left behind. They were in the immigrant coaches. They ran out of food with them on the train. In Chicago and in St. Paul, Minnesota, Norwegians came to the depot and asked to take them out to dinner. Came to Astoria, Oregon, but came first to Rainier. The first time her brother saw toothpicks on the table he thought Americans ate wood.</p>
180, side 1	<p>676: LANGUAGE</p> <p>Her mother had worked for some people who had been in the U.S. so she could speak a few words. She found a restaurant, but could only say coffee. A man came who spoke Norwegian helped them. This man knew her father and wired to tell him when they would arrive.</p>
180, side 1	<p>725: ARRIVAL IN ASTORIA, OREGON</p> <p>After two weeks of travel. They crossed the longest trestle in the U.S. in Astoria. She didn't recognize her father and her youngest sister was born three months after he left. Her father was a carpenter then.</p>
180, side 1	<p>757: SCHOOL IN OREGON</p> <p>After two weeks she had to begin school. There were lots of children which had parents that didn't speak English. In one section of town you couldn't even buy anything unless you could speak Finnish.</p>
180, side 1	<p>776: PREJUDICES</p> <p>She felt some prejudice in school since she had a hard time with the language. After about nine months she started to feel at home and started using English.</p>
180, side 1	<p>835: LANGUAGE</p>

Container(s)	Description
	Her mother didn't learn much English until they moved to the farm and there were a few Norwegians around.
180, side 1	840: CHINESE COMMUNITY There was a large Chinese community, but she really didn't have contact with them until she started working.
180, side 1	846: SCHOOL Went for eight years. High school lasted two years and she took a commercial course.
180, side 1	854: BOOKKEEPING Went to work bookkeeping and worked for the Haukes until she was married.
180, side 1	858: MEETING SPOUSE They met in Astoria. She had known his brother for a long time. He was a Norwegian by the name of Marinus Berg. Berg means "mountain."
180, side 1	874: WEDDING It took place on the farm in the apple orchard. She wore a white wool suit. They went to Portland for their honeymoon and stayed with her brother-in-law and returned by boat to Astoria. Her husband was a carpenter and a contractor.
180, side 1	898: They lived in Astoria for five years after their wedding (1917-1922) then they moved to Portland. Her husband came from Norway to the U.S. by working on a ship and then jumped ship in the U.S.
180, side 1	923: CHILDREN Son was a pilot in WWII. He got to work in the Pentagon and for the U.S. government in Europe while stationed in Germany. Her daughter, Bonita Foster, lives in Seattle and has five children. Agnes has one great grandchild.
180, side 1	956: WORK Her husband got sick so she had to earn the money. She started managing apartments and later started working for the Portland Housing Authority. Then she got married and her husband decided she had worked enough.
180, side 1	1011: CHURCH LIFE She always goes to church. Now she goes to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. There are a few other Scandinavians that go there.
180, side 1	1015: ORGANIZATIONS Belongs to the Sons of Norway. Her first husband sang with the Multnomah Mannskoret. He died in 1939.

Container(s)	Description
180, side 1	1029: VISITS TO NORWAY She has returned twice. The first time she returned was after 50 years and there was a lot of change. Many people spoke English. She still corresponds with Norway.
180, side 1	1041: NORWEGIAN PEOPLE They were hard working and had to struggle to make ends meet, but now they have changed. Now they have oil and they dress well.
180, side 1	1060: IMPORTANCE OF NORWEGIAN HERITAGE She talks about Norway being ruled by Sweden and that they were all Swedes at the time that she came.
180, side 2	098: She continues talking about Sweden and its rule over Norway. There were no battles and Norway was allowed to have its own king. After this they changed to name of Kristiania to Oslo.
180, side 2	165: NORWEGIAN LANGUAGE She says in Norwegian that she can still read, write, and speak it. Her daughter can speak a little Norwegian. She had to take Norwegian when she went to St. Olaf College. It was required if your parents were Scandinavian. Bonita's youngest daughter took Norwegian at the University of Washington and speaks it well.
180, side 2	197: RELATIVES She has her brothers and sisters and their families here. She had some cousins back east which she has lost track of.
180, side 2	220: SPOKEN NORWEGIAN She recites the Lord's Prayer. She says this every night.
180, side 2	270: CONCLUDING COMMENTS She has had an interesting life. She took census one year. She has been a demonstrator for the two Minneapolis companies, Nordic Ware, and Chicago Cutlery for about twenty years. She has demonstrated all the way from Seattle to San Francisco, California. She demonstrated by making Scandinavian foods.
180, side 2	339: SONS OF NORWAY Finance Secretary for eleven years, treasurer for two years, district board for six years, and has attended conventions in Chicago, Minneapolis, and California.
180, side 2	357: They discuss a picture of her husband's home, which is hanging on the wall.

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Christmas
Emigration and immigration
Family--Norway
Marriage service
Norwegian-Americans--Ethnic identity
Norwegian-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Interviews
Norwegian-Americans--Social life and customs
Ocean travel
Railway travel

Personal Names :

Dyrhaug, Agnes--Interviews
(creator)
Foster, Bonita Berg
Pettersen, Ove
Berg, Marinus
Berg, Maurice
Dyrhaug, Peter
Peterson, Anton
Peterson, Jette Krestine
Pettersen, Hannah
Pettersen, Indianna
Pettersen, Peter

Corporate Names :

Chicago Cutlery Consumer Products, Inc.
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church (Portland, Or.)
Nordic Ware
Sons of Norway (U.S.) Grieg Lodge No 15 (Portland, Or.)

Family Names :

Berg family
Dyrhaug family
Ovesen family
Peterson family
Pettersen family

Geographical Names :

Astoria (Or.)
Nord-Statland (Norway)
Portland (Or.)

Form or Genre Terms :

Oral histories

Occupations :

Bookkeepers
Carpenters
Sawmill workers

Finding aid prepared by Kerstin Ringdahl and Amity Smetzler
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