

Gerda Farestrand Oral History Interview, 1982

Overview of the Collection

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| Creator | Farestrand, Gerda |
| Title | Gerda Farestrand Oral History Interview |
| Dates | 1982 (inclusive) 1982 1982 |
| Quantity | 2 file folders 1 sound cassette |
| Collection Number | t179 |
| Summary | An oral history interview with Gerda Farestrand, 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

Gerda Farestrand was born in 1909 in Måløy, Norway to Torvald and Olga Gotteberg. Torvald, who passed away the year Gerda was born, was a baker and Olga did weaving and sewing. When Gerda was seven and half years old, Olga passed away as well, and Gerda, who was an only child, was raised by her maternal grandparents, Hanna and Haldor Gotteberg. Haldor made and mended fishing nets. Måløy was a shipping center, and Gerda clearly remembers WWI and the effects it had on Norway. Flour, sugar, shoes, margarine, butter, and grains were rationed from 1914-1919, but Gerda's family never went hungry. At the end of the war, Austrian and German children were brought to the island in order to restore their health.

Gerda attended school until she was fourteen, working in the cannery during the summers, and after she was confirmed, she went to work full-time. In 1928, Gerda's aunt and uncle returned to Norway for Christmas and convinced Gerda's grandmother that Gerda's future was in Canada, where they lived. Gerda's uncle offered to pay her way over, and she left for Flaxcombe, Saskatchewan on March 7, 1929. Gerda was not impressed with Flaxcombe and stayed with her aunt and uncle only fourteen months before moving to Saskatoon, where she got a housekeeping job. After fourteen months, Gerda moved to Toronto to find better employment. She got a job the first day she was there, which lasted

for one month. She then began working for a doctor's family. While in Toronto, Gerda got a letter from her future husband, Ingvar Farestrand, who was living in Portland, OR. Ingvar was from Måløy also and asked Gerda to come to Portland. If she did not like it, he offered to pay her way back to Toronto. Gerda agreed to come, but at the immigration office in Vancouver, British Columbia, she was told that her passport was only good for travel in Canada. Ingvar then came up to Canada to help her obtain a permit to the United States, but she ended up applying for a marriage license, and they were married on January 15th.

At first, Gerda was not impressed with Portland either, but she made it her permanent home. In Portland, Gerda worked at a cleaning shop with her husband for almost thirty-one years and became active at Norse Hall. She and Ingvar had three children: Harvey, Irene, and a second daughter (name not obtained during interview). Ingvar had a bad heart and passed away twenty years after they were married. Gerda returned to Norway in 1958 and 1960, and believes that there is a revival of Norwegian culture in the United States, which includes their carving, sewing, knitting, and literature as well as the traditions. Since retirement, Gerda has kept herself busy with activities such as visiting the nursing home, participating in the Friendship Club, visiting her daughter, and attending a class on ancient Scandinavian history. She also donates to an organization called "Balogna Joe" and bakes cookies for the less fortunate at Christmas.

Lineage

Full Name: Gerda Farestrand. Maiden Name: Gerda Gotteberg. Father: Torvald Gotteberg. Mother: Olga Gotteberg. Maternal Grandfather: Haldor Gotteberg. Maternal Grandmother: Hanna Gotteberg. Spouse: Ingvar Farestrand. Children: Harvey Farestrand, Irene Farestrand, Unnamed second daughter

Content Description

This interview was conducted with Gerda Farestrand on May 20, 1982 in Portland, Oregon. It contains information on family background, work, WWI, immigration to Canada and the United States, marriage and family, community activities, and Norwegian heritage. 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 |
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| Cassette | |
| 179, side 1 | 013: PERSONAL BACKGROUND Full name is Gerda Gotteberg Farestrand. Her maiden name was Gotteberg and her married name is Farestrand or Færestrand which how they spell it in Norway. She was born in Måløy, which is south of an area called Vestkapp. This is on the western most part of Norway. She was born in 1909. This was primarily a fishing area. This was also a shipping center. |
| 179, side 1 | 065: PARENTS He mother was Olga and her father, Torvald. Her father died the year that she was born and her mother died when she was seven and a half. She was raised by her maternal grandparents, Hanna and Haldor Gotteberg. |
| 179, side 1 | 084: GRANDFATHER'S WORK |

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| | He used to make and mend fishnets. |
| 179, side 1 | 100: BROTHERS AND SISTERS She was an only child. |
| 179, side 1 | 103: GRANDPARENTS Grandfather came from the area and went out fishing even up to Lofoton. One of his fishing friends had several sisters and he married one. She came from Saltfjord near Bodø. They lived in Bodø and had five girls. The flu epidemic came and three of the girls died. It was so cold they couldn't even bury the bodies until spring. They moved to Måløy in 1892. |
| 179, side 1 | 152: MOTHER Did weaving and sewing. She died at the age of 29. |
| 179, side 1 | 160: CHILDHOOD Grandfather was an avid reader and every Sunday they went to the library and he read to her. When she was 5 years old, he took out "Uncle Tom's Cabin" for her to read by herself. That was the first book she read. |
| 179, side 1 | 180: WORK Went to work in the cannery in the summertime. This gave her something to do and a way to earn money for school clothes. |
| 179, side 1 | 186: Confirmed in 1914 and then went to work fulltime. |
| 179, side 1 | 191: REASONS FOR EMIGRATING Her aunt and uncle came back to Norway for Christmas in 1928 and convinced her grandmother that Gerda's future was in Canada. |
| 179, side 1 | 202: FAMILY NAME The name Gotteberg came from the name of the place where they lived and everyone there went by that name. This is the same as for the name Farestrand. Everyone on that "Strand" (beach) went by the name Faerstrand. Faerstrand was on the other side of the island on which she grew up on. Gerda and her husband knew the same people and were distantly related. |
| 179, side 1 | 228: CHILDHOOD HOME It is still there. It was a two-story house. There was a living room, a parlor, and a kitchen, two bedrooms upstairs and a full basement. |
| 179, side 1 | 245: CHRISTMAS They had a tree. She remembers the Christmas from the year her mother died. She decorated a branch on the back of a chair and put the dolls and the things that she had gotten from the neighbors on the chair. There was a knock on the |

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| | door and when she got there was a package and she never did find out who that was from. |
| 179, side 1 | 292: DOLLS She kept her dolls until she was 19. She gave them to some neighbor girls that used to come and play with them. In 1979, on her way to Scotland, she ran into these girls' younger brother. This gift had meant a lot to them. |
| 179, side 1 | 370: WEDDINGS They lasted for three days. Gerda's grandmother was known for being a good cook and was often asked to help at weddings. Gerda got to go along to these weddings and would get new clothes to go. |
| 179, side 1 | 398: SYTTENDE MAI This was a big occasion. She would get a new dress for this too. Not everyone had a bunad then. |
| 179, side 1 | 433: SCHOOL DAYS Went to school until the age of 14. |
| 179, side 1 | 436: CANNERY WORK This cannery packaged sardines and fish balls. She ran the machine, which put the rubber part on the lids. It was very boring. She was living with her grandmother at this time. Her grandfather had died when she was 15. |
| 179, side 1 | 455: WWI Måløy was a shipping center. She recalls the day that she learned of the start of the war. She was with her grandparents haying when the daughter of the man who had the telegraph station came and told them. She ran all the way home to find her mother having coffee with some ladies. She was upset that they were drinking coffee when the whole world was burning up. They had seen the Kaiser the week before in his cruiser in Måløy harbor. They went out in a rowboat to see the ship. A band came out on deck and played for them and then the Kaiser came to the railing and waved to them. When the war broke out the Kaiser was in Nordfjord salmon fishing. |
| 179, side 1 | 524: EFFECTS OF WWI ON THE AREA They were rationed immediately. There was rationing from 1914-1919. They rationed flour, sugar, shoes, margarine, butter, and grains. You couldn't get thread unless you bought cloth and that was hard to come by. They were never hungry. They had a few chickens, four or five sheep and a cow. |
| 179, side 1 | 562: END OF THE WAR Austrian and German children were brought to the island along with some nurses to bring them back to good health. She remembers a captured German submarine coming into the harbor. She recalls another submarine coming in with two casualties. They had a funeral and the school children got excused |

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| | from school to see it. She talks about Quisling and his involvement in helping the children of the war. |
| 179, side 1 | <p>646: MEMORIES OF THE TITANIC</p> <p>This was in 1912 when Gerda was 3 years old. Her aunt was packing to go to Canada when the paper came out with its headlines in red about the Titanic sinking. Gerda's mother and grandmother burned it in the stove before Augusta, Gerda's aunt could see it, because they didn't want to upset her.</p> |
| 179, side 1 | <p>668: REASONS FOR EMIGRATION</p> <p>Had hoped to go to Portland, Oregon someday. In 1929, her aunt and uncle came home for Christmas. Her uncle said he would pay her way to come over and that she could stay with them as long as she wanted to and earn \$25 a month helping her aunt. She wasn't too excited about going because of the idea of the prairie didn't appeal to her, but her grandmother thought it would be a good idea since she (the grandmother) was getting old and that she wouldn't have to worry about Gerda.</p> |
| 179, side 1 | <p>688: TRAVEL TO CANADA</p> <p>Left Måløy on March 7, left Bergen on the 9th and went to Southampton, England where they took the train to London, England and spent three days. Then they went to Southampton where they boarded the ship and went across the channel to Cherbourg, France where they picked up a lot of Polish people. From there they traveled to Queenstown, Ireland and then to the open sea. She wasn't seasick until this point in the journey but once on the open sea she didn't see the dining room for eight days. The 23rd of May they came to Halifax, Canada.</p> |
| 179, side 1 | <p>719: TRAIN TRAVEL</p> <p>They left Halifax by immigrant train that night. During the night they were told to leave their train car because its wheels wouldn't go around and they were moved to another car. She remembers North Bay, Ontario; Winnipeg, Manitoba; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and then to Flaxcombe, Saskatchewan.</p> |
| 179, side 1 | <p>748: AUNT'S HOME</p> <p>She wasn't impressed with the area. She describes the town of Flaxcombe and how far they lived from their neighbors. She also describes the climate and how muddy it could get.</p> |
| 179, side 1 | <p>800: CHRISTMAS IN CANADA</p> <p>They had lutefisk and a Christmas tree.</p> |
| 179, side 1 | <p>805: SASKATOON</p> <p>She stayed with her aunt and uncle for fourteen months and then went out to be on her own in Saskatoon. She got Thursday and Sunday afternoons off. She</p> |

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| | recalls her first pair of silk stockings costing her \$2 or four days of work. She stayed there for fourteen months. |
| 179, side 1 | 815: LANGAUGE By necessity she picked up a few words a day until she could make sentences. She had a hard time with the word "toy" because it was so close to the Norwegian word, "toey." |
| 179, side 1 | 830: WORK Got a job for someone who had college students. She got a room and board for \$28 a month. This was for students at the University of Saskatchewan. |
| 179, side 1 | 835: DUST STORMS They would get dust storms. If they saw a dark cloud and they had clothes on the line they run to get them in because once the dust got in you could never get it out. She tells a story about a Mrs. Løken (?) from Gøvik, Norway who came to Saskatoon. She saved up snow water until she had enough to wash her hardanger decorated sheets and pillowcases, but when she hung them out they froze and broke off the line. |
| 179, side 1 | 875: WORK She talks about how she did the washing when she was working. It was too cold to take a basket full of clothes out at one time. You had to bring each piece out separately and let it stick or freeze to the line. Monday was washday and if you didn't have your clothes on the line by 7am it was disgraceful. She had to get up at 4am to get the fire going to boil the water. After the clothes were on the line she had to make breakfast. |
| 179, side 1 | 894: TORONTO Some of the girls were going to Toronto, Canada to find better jobs, more money, and to be rid of the dust storms. Gerda went with them even though she promised her aunt that she wouldn't. She got a job the first day with someone who needed help for one month. Then she got a job with a doctor's family. The only one who knew where she was her grandmother in Norway. |
| 179, side 1 | 905: FUTURE SPOUSE Got a letter from him in Portland, Oregon. He had had trouble finding her. He wanted her to come and see the West Coast and offered to pay her way back if she didn't like it. She thought that was a good deal. |
| 179, side 1 | 918: TRAIN TRAVEL Took the train from Toronto on Monday and came to Vancouver, B.C. on Saturday. She had to wait there until Monday for the immigration office to open up so that she could get permission to go into the U.S. |
| 179, side 1 | 926: IMMIGRATION OFFICE |

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| | <p>She wanted a one-month permit to be in the U.S. They told her that her passport was only good for travel in Canada. She got stuck there for Christmas. Ingvar came up Christmas morning to try to help her get the permit to the U.S. She applied for a marriage license. Ingvar came up on the 14th of January and they were married on the 15th. Within a week she got her traveling papers. When she came to the U.S. it was prohibition time and they searched everything in her trunk.</p> |
| 179, side 1 | <p>974: PORTLAND, OREGON She didn't like it at first, but has been there for 50 years.</p> |
| 179, side 1 | <p>980: FAMILY Her husband had a bad heart and died about 20 years ago. They had three children, four grandchildren and one great-grandchild.</p> |
| 179, side 1 | <p>990: IMPRESSIONS OF PORTLAND Ingvar had an errand boy that gave her the tour of the town. She was homesick a lot for Norway until her grandmother died and then she didn't have any need to go back.</p> |
| 179, side 1 | <p>1015: TRIPS TO NORWAY Went in 1958. Some things had changed. They were still feeling the effects of the war. She talks about the clothes they sent to Norway as their own form of aid. They returned again in 1960 and took the girls. Their son went in 1964 and three of his four children have been to Norway.</p> |
| 179, side 1 | <p>1075: CLEANING SHOP She worked at this business with her husband for almost 31 years.</p> |
| 179, side 1 | <p>1080: CHILDREN Harvey lived in Portland and works for a printing company. Irene is a legal technician for the U.S. Attorneys Office. The other girl was a purchasing agent for Bonneville (Power Co.).</p> |
| 179, side 1 | <p>1098: NORSE HALL Used to go sometimes but she didn't have a lot of time for it.</p> |
| 179, side 2 | <p>SIDE II:</p> |
| 179, side 2 | <p>068: NORSE HALL Has been active for the past 18 years. She talks about some of their activities, lutefisk dinner and making lefse.</p> |
| 179, side 2 | <p>140: ACTIVITIES She talks about the activities that keep her busy now like visiting the nursing home, the Friendship Club, visiting her daughter and a class on ancient</p> |

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| | Scandinavian history. At Christmas time she bakes cookies for the needy. She also donates to an organization called "Balogna Joe," which also helps the needy. She tells of more donations. She explains that helping others is common in Norway. |
| 179, side 2 | 280: NORWEGIAN PEOPLE There are several kinds. Some will work until the job is done no matter if there is pay or not. Other people came from modest backgrounds and when they came to the U.S. whatever they earned was theirs. She feels that Norwegians have made quite a contribution to this country in the work that they did. They were willing to work. |
| 179, side 2 | 386: DISCRIMINATION She felt some discrimination when she was a newcomer, not from the Americans but from the Norwegians that had been here longer. |
| 179, side 2 | 415: SNAKKE NORSK GROUP This is a group of people who speak a limited amount of Norwegian that get together to speak it. She talks about a meeting they had where they read pages from Sigrid Undset's books. |
| 179, side 2 | 470: NORWEGIAN CULTURE Gerda feels that there is a revival of Norwegian culture, which includes their carving, sewing, knitting, and literature. She talks about the Norwegian Bunads. They look at some examples of bunads in the book, "Våre vakre bunader" published by Hjemmenes Førlag. She discusses the bunads of Sunnmøre and her interest in bunads. |
| 179, side 2 | 555: NORWEGIAN LANGUAGE There are Norwegian classes every year and then they also have discussion groups. She talks about the Vancouver, Washington group and the skit they did. The group Gerda belongs to was started by Birgit Hanssen who is very interested in keeping Norwegian going. |
| 179, side 2 | 590: STONE CARVINGS She talks about the stone carvings, "Helleristninger" which were discovered not too far from her home in Norway. She talks particularly about the find in Vingen, which is close to Hornelen, but they can be found all over Norway. Gerda is really interested in these. |
| 179, side 2 | 681: REFLECTIONS ON EMIGRATION She feels that she would have got along fine in Norway. She has always wanted to go back to Norway and live, but knows that life would be different for her there. |
| 179, side 2 | 720: BUNADER |

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| | She talks more about these cultural dresses and how they can cost up to \$2000 with their gold and silver decorations. She tells about a choir, which she saw at her church on Måløy where the ladies had on Nordfjord costumes with the belts that cost \$1000. She feels that the expense had gotten out of hand. |
| 179, side 2 | 811: SPOKEN NORWEGIAN She says the Norwegian table prayer. |
| 179, side 2 | 860: She talks more about the returning of the Norwegian traditions and how there were several generations skipped, but now these traditions are being brought back. |
| 179, side 2 | 915: Gerda talks about the high living standards in Norway. She talks about their furniture and dishes. She tells how they celebrate birthdays. She talks about Bjoernsterne Bjoernson who wrote the Norwegian national anthem. She relates a little Scandinavian history. |

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Costume -- Norway
 Emigration and immigration
 Family--Norway
 Marriage service
 Norwegian-Americans -- Celebrations and festivals
 Norwegian-Americans--Ethnic identity
 Norwegian-Americans--Northwest, Pacific--Interviews
 Norwegian-Americans--Social life and customs
 Railroad travel
 Sewing
 Weaving
 World War, 1914-1918

Personal Names :

Farestrand, Gerda--Interviews
 (creator)
 Farestrand, Irene
 Gotteberg, Haldor
 Gotteberg, Hanna
 Farestrand, Harvey
 Farestrand, Ingvar
 Gotteberg, Olga
 Gotteberg, Torvald

Family Names :

Farestrand family

Gotteberg family

Geographical Names :

Flaxcombe (Sask.)

Måløy (Norway)

Portland (Or.)

Toronto (Ont.)

Form or Genre Terms :

Oral histories

Occupations :

Cannery workers

Domestics

Finding aid prepared by Kerstin Ringdahl and Amity Smetzler
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