

Alaska State Library
Historical Collections

Guide to Collection

Lars Degn Nelson Photograph Collection, 1920s-1950s

PCA 596

2 albums containing:
79 B&w and color photographic prints
39 (8X10) b&w photographic prints
1 (8X10) color photographic print
1 (7X9) b&w photographic prints
35 (5X7) b&w photographic prints
2 (3 ¼ X 4 ½) b&w photographic prints
1 (5X7) color photographic print

Processed by: Brittany Dugger
April, 2017

5 Documents
1 Oral history interview
1 Book with 23 b&w photographs

ACQUISITION: This collection is a gift of Mary L. Dinon, granddaughter of Lars Degn Nelson.

ACCESS: The collection is unrestricted.

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PROCESSING: All photos have been digitized and retained in digital storage at the Alaska State Library, Historical Collections. Original photographs and albums were returned to the donor. This collection has been described at the item level. Descriptions come from the Donor's notes.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Lars Degn Nelson was born on December 28th, 1927 at the Scandinavian Cannery. The cannery was located at Snag Point Alaska, which is now known as Dillingham. His parents were August Nelson and Ella (Nielsen) (Nelson) Adkison. August Nelson was the winter watchman at the cannery. He drowned in a storm when Lars was two years old.

Lars was in the first graduating class of the territorial school in Dillingham, in the year 1949. He was drafted into the army in 1950 for the Korean War and served his time at Fort Richardson in Anchorage, Alaska.

In 1958, Lars met Mary Teresa "Terry" (Coady) Nelson while working at the Kanakanak Hospital. Despite an order by the Hospital Nursing Director that Terry was not to "fraternize with the local native boys," she fell in love with Lars and married him on October 30th, 1959. They lived on the local hospital compound until 1964, and then built a basement home on Lars' native allotment where they raised their children.

Lars worked as a fisherman, a maintenance worker at Kanakanak Hospital, as ground crew for Wein Air Alaska, a Dillingham Jail Guard, and finally, he retired in the early 1980's with his wife. Lars passed away Sunday, November 16, 2014 in Palmer, Alaska.

Biographical information pulled from obituary.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

This collection contains 2 Albums which hold 79 b&w and color photographs of the Dillingham area, the Scandanavian Cannery, PAF Cannery, and family and friends of Lars Degn Nelson, from the 1920's through the 1950's. Also included is an oral history provided by Harlan Adkison, obituaries for Lars Degan Nelson and his mother Ella Adkinson, as well as a book titled: "The Last of Yesterday." The book was created by Dillingham high school students in 1972. It describes the local commercial, religious, and social history of the Dillingham and Bristol Bay area.

SUBJECTS

Bristol Bay, Dillingham, Canneries, Southwestern Alaska.

INVENTORY

Album 1

- 1 Lars Degn Neilsen Born 1854 – Laso, Denmark Immigrated to USA 1876. Naturalized Citizen 1883 Married Helen Spaugh 1901 of Bethel, AK. Died 1928. Buried Dillingham [sic].
- 2 Portrait of Lars Degn Neilsen (Ella’s Dad) [sic].
- 3 Helen Spaugh [with Baby Ella.]
- 4 Helen (Mom) Neilson, 1917, with Robert and Ella [sic].
- 5 [Grave site and cross of Lars Degn Neilson.]
- 6 [Replica of photograph number 4.]
- 7 Ella and August Nelson with Lars circa 1930 or 1931.
- 8 Beluga Pete Nelson.
- 9 Mrs. Peter Nelson.
- 10 August "Gust" Nelson, Born 1899, Died 1932 [father of Lars Degn Nelson.]
- 11 Lars (about 4 years old), Rudy “August Rudolf” with mom and dad, 1931 [sic].
- 12 Ella May (Nielsen) Nelson holding her son Lars Degn Nelson, 1928.
- 13 August "Rudy" Nelson, early 1930s.
- 14 Baby Lars.
- 14a two page document: “How Lars Learned to Write His Name.”
- 15 Rudy and Lars sitting on porch.

- 16 Lars Degn Nelson, late 1920s.
- 17 Ella and Milo Douglas Adkison (Lars' stepfather) in Dillingham, AK [sic].
- 18 Ella Adkison [with daughter Arlene Adkison and Audrey Roberts.]
- 19 Mike "Milo Douglas Adkison" aboard a train [sic].
- 20 Mike Adkison with son, Harlan Adkison 1930s.
- 21 Mike Adkison and Oscar Nerguson.
- 22 Mike Adkison, [standing in front of car wearing a flat cap.]
- 23 Ella (Nielsen) Adkison with her Children Harlan and Arlene. 1938-1939
- 24 Arlene Adkison (stepsister to Lars) in the snow [sic].
- 25 Arlene Adkisin.
- 26 Moose head with baby [most likely Arlene Adkison.]
- 27 Ella wearing a black dress.
- 28 Mike wearing a parka and standing by dogsled.
- 29 Perry and Harlan Adkison wearing caps.
- 30 Ella with Adkison children [Perry, Harlon, Arlene.]
- 31 Lars-top left, Rudy-top right, Arlene- bottom left, Perry- bottom-center, Harlon-center-right.
- 32 L to R. Harlan Adkison, Rodney Sampson, and Perry Adkison, circa 1940 [sic].
- 33 Mike posing with dead moose, snowshoes, and huskies.
- 34 Bottom-left-Murphy Knutsen, Bottom (sitting), George Smith [sic].
- 35 Dillingham Schoolhouse.

- 36 Dillingham school children posing with their teachers at the schoolhouse.
- 37 "Rudy" Nelson [in uniform.]
- 38 "Rudy" Nelson, 1949.
- 39 Front- Emma (Carlson) and Charlie Nielsen. Back Row- Anna (Backford) Nielsen, daughter-in-law to Charlie and Emma.
- 40 Perry [Dillingham sweatshirt and a ball cap with wild pet bird on shoulder.]
- 41 Mike posing with one of his sled dogs in the snow.
- 42 Ella Adkison and Emma [Mulkeit] Nunn.
- 43 Top-left- Nora Doleman, bottom-left- Ella, Mike, Katherine McGill.
- 44 "Unknown" young boy standing by animal skin being tanned.
- 45 Charlie Neilsen standing on porch [Ella's older brother.]
- 46 Robert Neilsen outside a cannery [Ella's younger brother.]
- 47 Harry Doleman sitting in the grass.
- 48 Nora Doleman in dress, standing in front of blossoming tree.
- 49 Peter Nelson, Millie, Annie P. Nelson, Alice, Carlie Boy, Peter, Esther.
- 50 [Unidentified group of cannery workers sitting on porch, smoking and drinking.]
- 51 Left to Right: George Smith, Dick Armstrong, John Smith, Eddy Brandon, Billy Brandon, August "Rudy" Nelson, Arthur Brandon. Picture taken approx. 1949 in Dillingham.
- 52 [Group of schoolchildren standing outside Dillingham Schoolhouse with their teacher.]

Album 2

- 1 Marriage certificate of Charles Nelson and Helen Spaugh.
- 2 Typed information on Marriage Certificate and Certificate of Baptism. Includes witnesses and pastor information as well as an official signature by a U.S. Commissioner.
- 3 Obituary for Ella Adkison.
- 4 Typed eulogy [2 pages] for Milo Douglas Adkison.
- 5 Obituary [2 pages] for Lars Degn Nelson.
- 6 Sailboats in drydock. *****
- 7 Sailboats lined up at the base of unidentified cannery. *****
- 8 Enlargement of photograph number 7.
- 9 Drydocked sailboats inside unidentified cannery. *****
- 10 Scandinavian Cannery, 1939.
- 11 Scandinavian Cannery, 1939.
- 12 Headstone for Gress P. Hale, died 1937.
- 13 Territorial School, 1939.
- 14 Sail boats, 1939.
- 15 Dillingham Garbage, 1939.
- 16 Dillingham with PAF Cannery in foreground, 1939.
- 17 Unidentified cannery. *****
- 18 Unidentified cannery, marked #16 on back of photo. Smoke pouring out cannery chimney. *****
- 19 Commissioner Fenno, 1939.

- 20 Left to right: Harold Freutel, Bookkeeper. Jack Gillis, Forman. Sig Johnson, Supt. Dillingham, 1947.
- 21 Left to right: Jack Gillis, Sig Johnson [holding up a large salmon.]
- 22 [Group of people around large beluga whale.] PAF dock, 1947.
- 23 Ella May Neilsen in fur coat with husband, August Nelson (from Sweden) 1930-1931. Taken at the Dillingham Hatchery in AK. Small boy is Lars Degn Nelson.
- 24 Mildred Nelson Case, Gardener, 1947. *****
- 25 Lars Degn Nelson with Millie and *****
- 26 Nora Doleman, right [standing with a group of people.]
- 27 Margaret Bradford standing outside Lowe Trading Company, circa 1939.
- 28 PAF Cannery, 1939.
- 29 1939 [Lowe Trading Company building with men standing out front.]
- 30 Unidentified Cannery, 1939. Marked #10. *****
- 31 Peter Pan Compound, 1939.
- 32 Kanakanak Hospital, 1939.
- 33 PAF cannery sailboats out on the water, 1939.
34. 41 page book titled: "The Last of Yesterday, The History of Dillingham and Nushagak Bay."