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Fall 11-12-2017

## Malene's Immigration from Norway

Devan Reische

[dreische11@gmail.com](mailto:dreische11@gmail.com)

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### Recommended Citation

Reische, Devan, "Malene's Immigration from Norway" (2017). *USU Student Folklore Fieldwork*. Paper 262.  
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**Karla Childers**

**Meridian, California**

**November 11, 2017**

## **Malene's Immigration from Norway**

### **Family Legend**

**Informant:** Karla Childers is my aunt. She is the middle child in a family of 3 children, she was adopted into the family after my grandmother did not think she could have more children after having my father. She spent part of her years growing up in Sacramento, before moving to our family's farm in Meridian, California. Our family has owned property on that same stretch of land since the late 1800s. My aunt Karla was very close with great grandma Nora who passed on Norwegian stories and traditions to my aunt Karla. Karla and her family still reside on our family farm in Meridian, California.

**Context:** My great great grandma Malene (pronounced Ma-lee-na) immigrated from Norway with her husband through Ellis Island in New York City. Karla learned these stories through her close connection with my great grandmother Nora, who was Malene's daughter. Stories like Malene's immigration story are often told the young women in the family at a yearly event called Norwegian Tea. This event is hosted by my aunt Karla and includes all the women who are direct descendants of Malene's two daughters Nora and Anna. Karla told me this at her kitchen table in a discussion that included many stories from our Norwegian heritage.

**Text:** My favorite story has always been the story of how Malene [pronounced Ma-lee-na] Pederson, her married name, came to America. She was married in Norway and her husband came to America first. In those days you had to have a job or have a sponsor and be healthy enough to work before they would allow you in to the United States. He came first and had a job with what is now US Steel. She came to the United States through Ellis Island with two young children, Anna and Ole. Her ship came in at a different time than it was expected and when she was processed her husband was not there yet. So here she was in America and probably being detained because they didn't just let you go then not speaking more than a few words of English. Fortunately, he did arrive at the given time which was a few days later and she was able to join him. I have always thought about how terrifying that must have been to not speak the language, have very little means, two very young children and your husband not be there.

**Texture:** My aunt Karla has fond memories of my great grandma Nora. She loves to tell the stories of our Norwegian heritage, or anything about Nora and her family in general. Before our conversation really began she said something along the lines of, “there is always a family member that you really connect with and become closest to. After they die you are the only one around to tell their stories.” Our family is not big on sharing stories of our ancestors, but Karla does love to talk about Nora when she has an audience willing to listen. She told this story warmly and with joy in her eyes. It was almost as if she could see the story playing out in her mind.

Devan Reische

Utah State University

ENGL 2210

Lynne McNeill

Fall 2017