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Oral History Transcription with Evald Anderson & Linnea Anderson

Evald Anderson

Linnea Anderson

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COPY

Evald & Linnea Anderson's
Oral History

by Debra Zeigler

Today is August 1, 1979 and I'm talking with Mr. and Mrs. Evald Anderson at their home on Capitol Hill in New Sweden, Maine.

Q. Tell me, Mr. Anderson, when were you born?

A. 6th of April, (Mrs. Anderson interjects: 17th of April). Yes, 17th of April.

Q. Where were you born?

A. Right here.

Q. In this house?

A. Yes.

Q. Who were your parents?

A. Agnes and Wilhelm Anderson.

Q. Your mother was a first settler, wasn't she?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember your grandparents at all?

A. Anna.

Q. Who would that be?

A. (Mrs. Anderson interjects: Mrs. Clase.)

Q. Oh, Anna Brita Magnason Clase. They have a picture of her at the museum. What do you remember of her?

A. Not too much. She was sick.

Q. She was?

A. (Mrs. Anderson interjects: I don't know, I didn't know her.)

Q. Do you remember any on the Anderson side?

A. No. Just my father.

Q. When were your parents born?

A. Mother must have been born in 1864. (Mrs. Anderson interjects: 1866.)

Q. She was born in Sweden?

A. Yes. Göteborg.

Q. When did she die?

A. February 28th, 1949. (Mrs. Anderson)

Q. What about your father?

A. He was born in... (Mrs. Anderson) March 9, 1850. In

Q. Did he come over with the first settlers, too?

A. I wouldn't know.

Q. How old was he when he came?

A. I wouldn't know that, either.

Q. Did he come with his mother and father?

A. No, he came with a friend of his, Forrest Nelson's uncle, Carl Johnson. I think they came together.

Q. Where did your parents settle?

A. Right here, Mama settled.

Q. The Clases settled here?

A. Yes.

Q. Is there a farm here? How many acres?

A. Well, it was 104 acres, the first part, but my aunt got 25 acres off of it and that's where Harry Wright lives now.

Q. Do you remember where your father's people settled, the Andersons?

A. No, he was alone.

Q. Where did he live, though? Did he just come over here and get married right away?

A. They were down in Vinalhaven, Maine and then they came up here. It was just himself and their family, as far as I know.

Q. What did he do for work?

A. I wouldn't know. (Mrs. Anderson: It was your grandfather that was a sailor.) Yes. He was a sea captain.

Q. That was Capt. Clase.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember him at all?

A. No.

Q. He died before you could remember him?

Q. Was your father a farmer?

A. Well, yes. First when he came, he was in a kind of business, I don't know. He never said much about it. He got here and married my mother and they started farming here.

Q. Did they live in this house?

A. Oh, yes. They had a post office here.

Q. In this house?

A. Yes. Then he used to bring the mail up to Nelson's post office. He hauled mail, for a few years, I don't know how long it was.

Q. Can you remember that?

A. No. That's a long time ago.

Q. So how many children were there in your family?

A. Eight.

Q. Can you give me the names?

A. Percival was the oldest one, and then Reinold, and then Hilda, Henry, Carl, Judith, Hope, and myself.

Q. Are they all still living, today?

A. No.

Q. You're the only one left?

A. No, Judith, Hope and Evald. (Mrs. Anderson)

Q. What's Judith and Hope's last name now?

A. Espling, they married brothers. (Mrs. Anderson)

Q. Do they live in New Sweden now?

A. No, they live in Caribou. (Mrs. Anderson)

Q. So when did you get married?

A. 1937.

Q. And who did you marry?

A. Linnea Johnson. Linnea Helen Margaret. We all had two middle names in our family. (Mrs. Anderson)

Q. When were you born?

A. I was born July 2, 1915.

Q. In New Sweden?

A. Yes. Up in Lebanon.

Q. Who were your parents?

A. Oscar and Annie Johnson.

Q. Can you tell me when they were born?

A. Yes. Papa was born June 18, 1877 and Mama was born January 31, 1886. They were both born in Sweden, but I don't remember exactly where. I think Mama was born in Jemtland, but I'm not sure. I thought I had their wedding certificate or something, but I couldn't find it.

Q. When did they come over?

A. You know, I don't know that. I think Mama was just small and I don't remember about Papa.

Q. But they weren't married in Sweden, they were married here?

A. They were married here.

Q. Do you remember where they were married? What church?

A. Well, they were married in Stockholm. I suppose it was the Baptist Church because that's where we used to go. December 5, 1907.

Q. How many brothers and sisters were in your family?

A. We were eleven children.

Q. Do you know their names?

A. Oh, yes, I know their names and I have them right here anyway. Rosie, Matthew, Viola, Astrid, Linnea, Eliner, Iris, Ernest, George, Josephine, Dahlia.

Q. What number were you?

A. I was the fifth one.

Q. Are they all living today?

A. No, Rose, Matthew, Viola and Ernest are gone.

Q. In New Sweden?

A. No, I have three sisters in Florida and two in Connecticut, and my brother George in Caribou.

Q. When did your parents pass away?

A. Mama died December 1945 and Papa died in August of 1938.

Q. So, can you tell me a little about your wedding, when you got married

and who married you?

A. Us?

Q. Yes.

A. We were married in Caribou on a cold, cold winter day. The coldest day we ever had. It was Pastor Hall, of the Methodist Church.

Q. So did you come to live in this house after you were married?

A. Yes.

Q. And you've lived here ever since?

A. Yes.

Q. How many children did you have?

A. We just had one. Well, we had one stillborn. Our son ~~Ferry died~~ in 1965. He was born in 1941.

Q. Did he ever marry and have children?

A. No. So we don't have any descendants, we too.

Q. What church are you a member of?

A. Lutheran.

Q. New Sweden? Have you always been members of the Lutheran Church?

A. Yes. When I was a child and still living at home, we went to the Baptist Church in Stockholm. (Mrs. Anderson)

Q. Were your parents always Lutheran? (Mr. Anderson) The ones from Sweden too?

A. Yes.

Q. Where did you go to school, Mr. Andersen?

A. Here in New Sweden, the Capitol School.

Q. How far did you go?

A. Well, I graduated and went to high school in Caribou.

Q. What year did you graduate?

A. I didn't graduate, times get too tough.

Q. What year did you quit school?

A. 1922.

Q. What do you mean times got tough?

A. Well, potatoes were eight or ten cents a barrel. You had to pay your

own way to school, it cost us 50¢ a day, for a ticket on the AVR.

Q. What did you do after you stopped going to school?

A. Oh, different jobs, too many to mention. Jack-of-all-trades, I guess.

Q. Did you farm?

A. I farmed a little, not much.

Q. Were you a carpenter?

A. Part time.

Q. Were you a part time plumber?

A. No, not a plumber. I worked in potato houses and worked down in Caribou for a while, in the South Side Hardware. He was janitor and bus driver at the school for five years. (Mrs. Anderson)

Q. Are you retired?

A. Yes.

Q. What did your father do, Mrs. Anderson?

A. He was a farmer.

Q. And your grandparents?

A. Yes, I think so.

Q. Do you remember your grandparents?

A. I remember my farmer and mormer, and my mother's mother, but I don't remember my mother's father, he died before I was old enough to realize who he was.

Q. Do you remember any stories they told about Sweden, or anything?

A. (Mr. Anderson) Well, some ghost stories.

Q. Like what?

A. (Mr. Anderson tells a little story of a funeral, but it is not clear on tape)

Q. They were good story tellers, your grandparents?

A. No.

Q. Did they ever compare Sweden to this place?

A. Why no. I guess that's why they picked this place, because it resembled Sweden. That's all I knew about it.

Q. Do you know why they wanted to come over?

A. My grandfather was gone so long, on the ocean, he was a sea captain

and grammie didn't like that so when they got a chance to come over here, they grabbed it.

Q. To keep him in one place.

A. Yes, to get away from the ocean. He never went back after that..(Mrs. Anderson)

Q. Did your parents ever say anything about Sweden? (Mrs. Anderson)

A. No, not that I remember.

Q. Did any of your relatives ever go back to Sweden?

A. No, not that I know of.

Q. Did yours, Mr. Anderson?

A. No.

Q. Did Agnes or any of her children go back?

A. No. (Mrs. Anderson) They haven't even been back to visit, have they?
No. (Mr. Anderson)

Q. Do you have any relatives back there, that you know of?

A. (Mr. Anderson) I don't know. (Mrs. Anderson) Maybe we do, but we never hear from them.

Q. Would you ever like to go back?

A. I don't care about it, I'm not much for travelling. (Mrs. Anderson)

Q. Do you both speak Swedish?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. Who took over the postmaster's job after your father stopped it?

A. There used to be a store where the telephone office is. They had the post office. Vaughn will tell you about that.

Q. Vaughn Pearson? They were up this summer.

A. Then the post office went down to where Gies store is, I think. Then it went down to John Ringdahl, and then to where it is now.

Q. You must remember W. W. Thomas quite well.

A. Oh, yes.

Q. What did you think of him?

A. He used to come down and visit. We had some meals down here. They'd set up big tables for them. I was just a little fellow, but I can remember. We used to eat the leftovers, the kids. (Mr. Anderson)

Q. So your family was good friends with him?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. Was this one of the first houses built, in New Sweden?

A. Yes.

Q. When was this house built?

A. 1871. It is 108 years old. Not the whole house, it was added on to.

Q. Thomas was a big man, wasn't he?

A. Well, he was quite stout, but he didn't seem to be too awful tall.

Q. Did he bring his whole family, when he came?

A. Sometimes he came all alone. One time they were up and he had his wife with him and Wolfgang, I remember him.

Q. That was one of Thomas's sons, wasn't it?

A. Yes, by his second wife. Oscar was a son by his first wife. She died, I guess.

Q. I heard one time that he married a Swedish girl and then when his first wife died, he married her sister.

A. Yes, it was something like that, now that you mention it. I think she was almost taller than he was.

Q. What was her name?

A. I can't remember, but it's on that picture of them at Fort Fairfield.

Q. You're the only one I've found that really knew the Thomas family, you know. You're the only ones that had contact with. Did you ever hear anybody that was sorry they came from Sweden to live here?

A. Oh, yes. Some said they were sorry.

Q. Why would they say they were sorry?

A. Things just didn't work out right, I guess.

Q. Do you have any naturalization or passport papers that they brought over with them?

A. If there were, I think Henry picked them all up for the museum. He came here and picked up many things.

Q. He was quite interested in town affairs, I guess.

A. Oh, yes.

Q. Where are all your relatives buried?

A. (Mrs. Anderson) We have some down in Jemtland, that's where my folks and my brothers are buried. My sister Rose is buried in Caribou. Perry is buried up here, my son.

Q. What about the Anderson family?

A. They're buried up there.

Q. The Clase's have a big plot up there, don't they?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember anything about the Baptist Church, when you were growing up, Mrs. Anderson?

A. Well, I'm not that old and I should remember but I know I used to go to Sunday school.

Q. Was it in Swedish?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. Do you remember anyone you used to go with?

A. Oh, I went with Hazel Young and Mabel Anderson was my teacher...Mabel Thorsen. I remember Marie Malmquist..I think she was midwife when most of us kids were born.

(next few parts of tape are not clear....)

Q. Where did you go to school, Mrs. Anderson?

A. I went to grammar school up in Lebanon, for eight years and then to Caribou High. Oh, that's right, I went to Stockholm for two years.

Q. What was your favorite subject?

A. Home Ec.

Q. Not many girls went to high school, did they?

A. Oh, quite a few did. I had to work my way, I had to work for my board. When I'd come home weekends, I would come on the electric car. It wasn't every weekend, by any means.

Q. Who did you live with?

A. Oh, two or three different places in Caribou. Two or three different families.

Q. How did you have time to study?

A. I guess I didn't do too much studying. I managed to get by, anyway.
 (next part of tape also not clear) I used to go home at lunch time and I had to wash dishes before I could go back. I lived on York Street at one time. That was a long walk to where the Junior High is now. (Mr. Anderson speaks) Just think how we used to walk. Clifford Anderson used to walk way from where Ralph Estey lives now. Down to the AVR. Then we took the AVR, went to Caribou, walked from the AVR station in Caribou up to the high school, and then walk from the high school to the AVR station, and then walk home from the AVR station here.

Q. When did you get your first car?

A. Well, the roads were all closed in the wintertime. (Mrs. Anderson asks "when did you get your first car"?) My brother bought one, the first car we had in 1914.

Q. What kind of car was that?

A. Ford.

Q. Model T?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you learn to drive?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. Do you still drive?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you ever drive, Mrs. Anderson?

A. No. I've driven, but I never got a license.

Q. When did your family get their first car?

A. My brother got a Ford Roadster, and it was the only car they ever had. I don't remember what year it was. (Mrs. Anderson interjects: 1930) It was before I got through school, anyway, while I was going to high school. Papa never drove.

Q. How old were you when you started driving?

A. Oh, twelve, I guess.

Q. How old were you when you got your license?

A. Sixteen.

Q. Was it Henry who bought the car?

A. No, Percival.

Q. Did your mother and father ever drive?

A. No. They just drove horses.

Q. You must have driven horses, Mrs. Anderson?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. What was that like?

A. That was a lot of fun. (Mrs. Anderson) Especially in the wintertime. (Mr. Anderson) I used to drive one with a horse behind and the other horse would follow along behind. (Mrs. Anderson interjects: You used to go down to the B. & A. and pick up doctors and...) Well, Dr. from Van Buren came down on the train, and I would bring him down to Ulrichs and then bring

him back to the station to get the next train.

Q. These trains were quite important, weren't they?

A. Oh, yes. That's the only transportation they had.

Q. They tore up the AVR tracks now, didn't they?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, that stood for Arcostook Valley Railroad, right?

A. Yes.

Q. That was an electric car?

A. Yes. It was a trolley car, with an electric cable.

Q. Now, did the AVR have regular railroads in other places?

A. Oh, yes. They had a junction and they connected with the CP (Canadian Pacific) All the potatoes that we shipped down the AVR, they went by CP to Washburn or to Caribou, I can't remember. They had a junction somewhere and then the CP would hook on and haul them. I don't know if B & A ever hooked on to any of the cars that we loaded. The CP hauled them down to Vanca-bore, I think it was, and then the Maine Central would take them.

Q. Were you ever in the military?

A. No.

Q. Were any of your brothers or relatives?

A. Well, Reinold was in the First World War.

Q. What branch was he in?

A. In the Army....machine guns.

Q. Were any of yours, Mrs. Anderson?

A. My brother, George, yes.

Q. What branch was he in?

A. He was in the Army. He was stationed in Korea when Mama died.

Q. Do you remember when he got out?

A. Mama died in 1945, and it was after that that he came home.

Q. Were any of your other relatives in the armed forces?

A. No.

Q. Did any members of your family play any musical instruments?

A. No, not in my family, but in his, didn't they? (Mrs. Anderson)

Q. Who played an instrument in your family?

A. The girls played. I played horn and drums and Carl and I played slide trombone. That's what Perry played, too. (Mrs. Anderson)

Q. Did you play in the New Sweden band?

A. Oh, yes, forty some years.

Q. What do you remember about that?

A. It was a lot of fun. We went to Canada, and we used to play down to the fair in Presque Isle. You played in parades here and there too. (Mrs. Anderson)

Q. Did you play at weddings?

A. No. They always played up here at midsummer.

Q. You always had concerts, didn't you in the summer?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you ever go on any long trips?

A. No, the furthest I ever went with them was to Van Buren and Fort Kent, and to Andover...Perth, over there. Indian Point what ever you call it, and we were down to Houlton. Presque Isle, mostly, at the fair.

Q. Did you ever belong to Grange or anything?

A. We belonged to the Grange a couple of years. Until they disbanded.

Q. What was the best or most exciting thing that ever happened to you?

A. The best? When we got married. (Mr. Anderson)

Q. For you too, Mrs. Anderson?

A. Yes.

Q. You got married in Caribou? Did you have a honeymoon?

A. No, we didn't have a honeymoon.

Q. Did you have a reception?

A. We had a reception here.

Q. How many years have you been married?

A. Forty three.

Q. Well, I want to thank you for your time and your information.

A. I hope it was worthwhile. (Mrs. Anderson)

Q. I'm sure it was.

A. Can we hear it?

Q. Sure. Thanks a lot.

THE END