

## Finding Aid to the Soeby-Metelmann Photograph Collection

### Soeby, Charles Christian, 1861-1929

Soeby-Metelmann Photograph Collection, 1903-1917

63 photographic prints; 5 x 7 in.

7 photographic prints; 8 x 10 in.

Collection number: Photo 2025

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### OVERVIEW

**Links:** View collection in [Digital Horizons](#)

**Access:** The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

**Provenance:** Photograph prints purchased from Robert McLeod, 1982 (Acc. 2246).

**Property rights:** The Institute for Regional Studies owns the property rights to this collection.

**Copyrights:** Copyright to images in this collection remains with the creators or are in the public domain.

**Citation:** Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo (item number)

### BIOGRAPHY

Charles C. Soeby and Charles Metelmann were residents of Walhalla, N.D. They were also amateur photographers who documented family, farm and friends in their community between 1903 and 1917.

Charles Christian Soeby was born Dec. 23, 1861 in Odense, Denmark. When nineteen years old he immigrated to America and settled at River Falls, Wisconsin. In 1883 he moved to Dakota Territory and filed on a homestead. In 1889 he moved to the Beaulieu community. He married Antonia Peterson in 1887. She was born also at Odense, Denmark on Jan. 23, 1858 and came to

Canada in 1886. Mr. and Mrs. Soeby had five children. Mr. Soeby died May 23, 1929 and she in 1933.

Charles E. Metelmann was born April 7, 1888 at Walhalla, the son of Emil and Mary Metelmann. He attended the North Dakota Agricultural College for a time. In 1926 he married Emma Best at Walhalla. They had no children. Mr. Metelmann died May 3, 1972.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The **Soeby-Metelmann Photograph Collection** consists of prints made from the original glass plate negatives in the hands of Robert L. MacLeod, a great-grandson of Soeby. Some 175 original glass plate negatives of the photographic work of Messes. Soeby and Metelmann are extant. They had a good 'eye' as photographers and the images have both artistic and historical value, although they do vary in terms of physical quality of the original negatives. In 1981 Mr. MacLeod became aware of the collection while a student at Moorhead State University. A public showing of portions of the collection was held in Fargo in 1982. Prints from the collection were also offered for purchase to the Institute for Regional Studies. From the collection the Institute chose 70 gelatin silver photographic prints for purchase. The current location of the original negatives is unknown.

The original images date from circa 1903 to 1917. The earlier images were taken by Soeby while the later ones by Metelmann. An incomplete handwritten inventory to the collection is available, a 61-item listing was also prepared by Mr. MacLeod. Both give identifying information and some dates. The 61-item inventory also gives the size of the original glass plate negative. A number on the back of each print is keyed to the number used in the handwritten inventory.

The Institute collection has been organized in alphabetical order by topic. The Institute collection stresses family and social scenes as well as aspects of farming, all in the northeastern part of the state. There is one formal image of Mr. and Mrs. Soeby dressed in their winter coats, standing outside in the snow. There are two images of a two-wheel cart hitched to a mule. There is a nice series of images of children, most taken outside. Scenes include a girl with two sheep, a boy with a small model of a house, very young girls outside, and two boys inside with musical instruments. The couples file, always of two people, includes two girls by a fence, two older men in rocking chairs, two older women in chairs, a man pouring a liquid into a glass held by a woman in the woods, and two images of the same pair of a girl and a boy(?) holding hands and seated beside each other.

The farming scenes, all with men, include plowing, seeding, and men standing by a steam engine. There are also two men repairing the wheel of steam engine by a shop, taken in the winter. The farms file has images of various farm houses, a barn, log cabin structures, and an elevated view of farm buildings. The group scenes are of men and women, taken both outside and several inside. In one a group of men are eating watermelon.

The photographers took a surprising number of interior views. They include a man and woman in the kitchen, the dinning room, two men playing billiards, a girl playing an organ, a family by a table covered with food and the wall behind covered with framed photographs, and a young woman seated by a parlor table. The three views from Kindersly, Saskatchewan, Canada show two men seated by their possessions eating, likely newly arrived at their homestead, the railroad station with many railroad cars, loaded wagons and men, and a view on the prairie showing many tents, wagons and several shacks. The last image likely was taken at the railroad depot.

There are two views of school children standing by school houses, likely taken on special occasions since the children are nicely dressed. The social scenes include an outdoor picnic, children by a Christmas tree, two men playing cards, group of men and women standing on a condemned bridge, and finally, a unique image of a group of men, women and children with two women lying in hammocks and two small girls in the foreground wearing boxing gloves. The final images are the exterior of the Morrison & Co. store with vines growing up the front wall, and the interior of a general store with several women and men looking at the photographer.

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