

Finding Aid to the Thorvald Ostbye Family Papers

Ostbye, Thorvald, 1860-1943

Thorvald Ostbye Family Papers, 1884-1947

.9 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 325

[Biography](#)

[Scope and Content](#)

[Box and Folder List](#)

OVERVIEW

Links: Finding aid to the [Thorvald Ostbye Family Photograph Collection](#)

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

Provenance: Donated by Lawrence Ostbye, 1955 (Acc. 325).

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

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Citation: [Identification of item]. Thorvald Ostbye Family Papers, MS 325, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

BIOGRAPHY

Thorvald Nelson Ostbye was born at Nittedal, Norway on February 8, 1860. As a boy in Norway he began learning the wagon and carriage making trade in his brother's factory. For several years he served on the crew of a ship sailing in the Baltic and to other European ports. In 1881 he immigrated to the United States landing at Boston in July and then to Fargo. He began work as a wagon-maker under A.S. Anderson. He later worked in the woodworking business. In 1909 he went into partnership with John Schlanser. Mr. Ostbye later formed his own business which later became T. Ostbye and Son. Among the buildings in Fargo which he built were the Everhardt Candy Company, Magill block, Carnegie Library and addition, Clara Barton and Hawthorne schools, the main building at Oak Grove High School, and St.

Mark's and Grace Lutheran Churches. He also built the Steele County courthouse at Finley, North Dakota.

On July 29, 1887 in Fargo he married Kristine Larson Kirkeby also of Nittedal, Norway. They had three children, Lawrence, Marie and Harriet.

Mr. Ostbye served two terms as Fargo Alderman, was a member of the Modern Woodmen and AOUW, and a charter member of the Sons of Norway and served as its first president. The Ostbyes were pioneer members of Pontoppidan Lutheran Church. Mr. Ostbye was also a trustee of Oak Grove Seminary for many years. Mr. Ostbye died February 8, 1943 and Mrs. Ostbye on January 29, 1955. They are buried at Riverside Cemetery in Fargo.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Thorvald Ostbye Family Papers, although very incomplete, provide a glimpse into the lives of a Norwegian American family in Fargo from the first half of the twentieth century. The collection touches upon his business career, their religious affiliation and daughter Harriett's years as a teenager. The papers have been organized into four series: Family material, Harriet Ostbye papers, Pontoppidan Lutheran Church, and T. Ostbye and Son Contractors.

The [Family Material Series](#) is a scattering of material. Of note is the menu of a dinner attended by King Oscar of Sweden and Norway in 1884 in Christiania (Oslo) at which possibly Mrs. Ostbye was a waitress. The poetry and writings are in Norwegian and longhand and are religious in nature. Some possibly could be sermons or speeches.

The [Harriet Ostbye Papers Series](#) consist mainly of her diaries for the period 1917 through 1921 although there are frequent gaps. But, what is written is very complete and give an excellent look into a girl's social life during high school and first year of college at the North Dakota Agricultural College. The *North Star* is for April 1918 and published at Horace Mann School in Fargo.

The [Pontoppidan Lutheran Church Series](#) contains various reports, lists and programs related to this Norwegian American Lutheran church in Fargo, of which the Ostbye family appears to have been active members. The two folders of histories are in Norwegian and each contains a handwritten and typed copy of the history of the congregation beginning with its organization in 1877. They were compiled for Pontoppidan's 40th and 50th anniversaries.

The [T. Ostbye and Son Contractors Series](#) consists mainly of the volumes listing their construction projects and provide a detailed breakdown of the various material and labor costs. The 1920-1930 construction projects ledger has an index. The financial ledger basically summarized the final bill for each project.

SEPARATION RECORD

The following non-manuscript materials have been separated and sent to the section indicated.

Photographs (Institute Photo Mss 325)

- 43 photographs

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder Contents

1/1 Finding aid, and Biographical material

Ostbye Family Material Series

1/2 Correspondence, 1919, 1926, 1940-1943
 1/3 Financial and legal material, 1931, 1940-1943
 1/4 Marriage certificate and miscellaneous family items, 1884-1943
 1/5 Pelican Lake property, 1939-1946
 1/6 Poetry and writings
 1/7 Writings

Harriet Ostbye Series

1/8 Diary, 1917 - Jan. 1919
 1/9 Diary, 1919
 1/10 Diary, 1921
 1/11 Book report, term papers
 1/12 Music and cooking notebooks
 1/13 The *North Star* and programs, 1918-1924

Pontoppidan Lutheran Church Series

1/14 Constitution, miscellaneous pamphlets, 1936, 1948
 1/15 History, 1917
 1/16 History, 1927
 1/17 Ladies Aid constitution and program, 1944
 1/18 Member contributions, 1940-1941
 1/19 Membership list
 1/20 Pastor's reports, 1943-1944, 1947

T. Ostbye and Son Contractors Series

1/21 Business receipts-, 1939-1943
 2/1 Financial ledger, 1923-1930
 2/2 Construction projects, 1910
 2/3 Construction projects, 1917-1918
 2/4 Construction projects, 1919
 3/1 Construction projects, 1920-1930