

Finding Aid to the Ole A. Wisness Papers

Wisness, Ole A., 1860-1944

Ole A. Wisness Papers, 1883-1926

.4 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 318

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OVERVIEW

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

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BIOGRAPHY

Ole A. Wisness was born at Stryn, Nordfjord, Norway on October 14, 1860. He immigrated to the United States in 1882 and settled in Cass County, N.D. near Hickson. He married Torgun Livdahl on Dec. 1, 1889 in Cass County, N.D. She was the widow of Nils Livdahl who died September 13, 1887. Nils was born July 21, 1846 and emigrated from Norway with his parents when two years old and later settled at Spring Grove, Minnesota. In 1874 he married Torgun Tyribakken of Spring Grove. She was born June 13, 1853 at Koshkonong, Wisconsin. In 1878 the Livdahls and their two small children moved to Hickson, N.D. where they established a farm on the Wild Rice River, southwest of town. The Livdahl's had five children: Carl, Gustav, Marie, Bergine and Albert.

Ole and Torgun Wisness lived on the Livdahl farm and had a son Arthur, born in 1890. Torgun died Dec. 12, 1939 and Ole A. Wisness died April 11, 1944. They are buried North Pleasant Lutheran Church cemetery, Hickson, N.D. as is Nils Livdahl.

Carl Livdahl was born July 10, 1874 at Spring Grove, Minnesota and came with his parents in 1878 when they settled on the farm near Hickson, N.D. He moved to Montana where he married Jessie Swenson on Feb. 7, 1920, living at Dodson where he worked in a bank. Carl later was Phillips County Register of Deeds at Malta, Montana. Carl died October 8, 1960 in Pope County, Minnesota. No further information is known about him.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The **Ole A. Wisness Papers** consists primarily of five ledgers that served two purposes, firstly for class notes taken by Carl Livdahl in the early 20th century, and later used as diaries by Carl's step-father Ole Wisness, spanning from 1910 to 1926. In addition there is a ledger documenting a book lending library apparently begun and maintained by Nils and Torgun Livdahl that spans from 1883 to 1906. Both the diaries and book lending ledger provide insight into the life of a Norwegian American family and community in North Dakota in the early 20th century.

The **Class Notes/Diaries Series** consists of five ledgers that were originally used by Carl Livdahl for taking class notes when he attended college, although the educational institution cannot be determined with certainty. One notebook has Luther Seminary (St. Paul, Minn.?) written inside the cover, although Carl Livdahl is not known to have attended it. Another possibility is Luther College at Decorah, Iowa. The time period is circa 1902. Beginning in 1910 his step-father Ole A. Wisness began writing his diary entries on the pages of the ledgers that had not been used by Livdahl. Although there is some sequential writing within the ledgers by Wisness, the chronology by year is not consistent. Thus the researcher should consult the folder listing to determine the location of particular years and months. All the diary entries are in Norwegian. He did not write every day of the month and most entries are quite brief, documenting the activities of the family in the Hickson community, farm life, social and religious activities, weather, as well as their travels.

The class notes sections are also listed in the folder listing with the title given at the beginning of each section and whether they are in Norwegian or English. They all are for classes related to the study of the *Bible*, both parts of the Old Testament and New Testament. The Norwegian section titles have been included as well in the folder listing. Authorship attribution to Carl Livdahl is based upon his name written inside the cover of several of the volumes. In one 'Luther Seminary' is inscribed and in another volume 'St. Paul, Minnesota.'

The **Subject Files Series** includes a ledger documenting books that were borrowed by neighbors in the Hickson community from 1883 to 1906. It is assumed the books were the personal library of Nils and Torgun Livdahl. This document provides a insight into the reading habits of the Norwegian American community of rural Hickson and also who used the library and how often. The information is in chronological order by date. Recorded is the borrower's name, the book's number and the date the book is

to be returned. The column headers are in Norwegian and the title on the first page is 'Udlaante Böger' (Loaned books). At the very end of the ledger is a listing of the books, numbered 1 through 176 together with the title. The header for this section reads, 'Catalogue over Biens Boger.' All the books appear to be in Norwegian.

The Letters & Documents file includes two handwritten minute summaries in Norwegian by Ole A. Wisness of a Nov. 20, 1913 specially meeting of the North Pleasant Lutheran Church. There are two letters dated June 1, 1921 from Wisness to E. A. Blilie of Kindred, in Norwegian, in which he discusses the local pastor, likely of North Pleasant. A letter in English is to an 'Elmer' written before Christmas, but not dated. The other is only the beginning of a letter in Norwegian to 'Arthur og Familie', dated March 28, 1926.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder Contents

1/1 Finding aid, and Biographical information

Class Notes/Diaries Series

1/2 Class Notes/Diaries Notebook "Dogmatik A, 1902" (no diary entries)
 p. 1-38 'Förste del af de grundleggende sandheder handler om theologiens natur og beskaffenhed' (28 sections; in Norwegian)
 p. 39 'Book records, Jan. 1, 1939'
 p. 50 'The Reformation in Norway' (English)
 p. 51 'Atonement of Christ' (English)
 p. 52 'Hemmelige selskaber' (in Norwegian)

1/3 Class Notes/Diaries Notebook
 p.1-2 [pages missing]
 p. 3-88 'Förste del. Den N.T. Kanons Hist.' (taken from p. 12) (in Norwegian)
 p. 91-99 Diary 1913, Oct. - Dec.
 p. 100-118 Diary 1914, Jan. - Dec.
 p. 121-125 Diary 1915 Jan. - April
 p. 125-126 Diary 1910 [general note entries]
 p. 127-131 Diary 1911 Jan. - Dec.
 p. 133-168 Diary 1912 Jan. - Dec.
 p. 169-208 Diary 1913 Jan. - Sept.

1/4 Class Notes/Diaries Notebook
 p. 1-4 'Old Testament Introduction' (English)
 p. 41-76 'O.T.I' (possible continuation of p. 4) (English)
 p. 9-13 Diary 1926 Jan. - March
 p. 77 Diary 1925 June
 p. 82-99 Diary 1915 May - Dec.

- p. 101-149 Diary 1916 Jan. – Dec.
p. 150-180 Diary 1917 Jan. – Dec.
p. 181-196 Diary 1918 Jan. – Dec.
- 1/5 Class Notes/Diaries Notebook
p. 1-96 'Old Testament Exegesis Commentaries on the Psalms' (English)
p. 109-134 Diary 1919 January
p. 132-150 Diary 1920 Jan. – Dec.
p. 151 Diary 1921 Jan.
p. 45 Diary 1925 December
- 1/6 Class Notes/Diaries Notebook
p. 1-100 'Den Positive theologies förste del Om Gud' (in Norwegian)
p. 102-122 Diary 1921 Jan. – Dec.
p. 123-142 Diary 1922 Jan. – Dec.
p. 143-165 Diary 1923 Jan. – Dec.
p. 166-172 Diary 1924 Jan. – Dec.
p.173-192 Diary 1925 Jan. – May

Subject Files Series

- 1/7 Books check-out register, 1883-1906
1/8 Letters & Documents, 1913, 1921, 1926