

PERSONAL BACKGROUND Name is Elias Kristoffersen Veholmen Holmes. Background on his names. His father's name was Kristoffer and came from an island called Veholmen and that's the name they went by until they came to the U.S. when their name changed to Holmes. Born in Stavanger, Norway on October 12, 1894.

PARENTS Kristoffer Veholmen and Nellie Selvig. Father was a farmer and he also sold milk for the dairy in Stavanger. Had a route through town two times a day. He had a big can of milk with a faucet on it that he used to measure out the milk into his customers' containers. This was a hard job in the winter. He drove a horse and wagon.

FAMILY FARM Had eight cows.

CHILDHOOD Had it good. Had Sunday clothes to wear.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS Jacob emigrated to the U.S. and lived in Illinois farming all his life. Everine died when 13. Joakim died when he was 21 years old in Illinois when kicked by a horse. Laurits (Louie) worked on the railroad in Belfield, North Dakota. Rakel lived here in Seattle after being married in Norway. Kornelius had a farm in Stanwood, Washington. Krist worked in a butcher shop in Sacramento, California. Then Elias. Magnus stayed at the home place in Norway. Nellie was married and lived on a farm in Benson, Minnesota.

EMIGRATION All siblings emigrated, but one. Their father had come to the U.S. in the 1870s. He worked falling timber in Wisconsin and working with timber on the Mississippi River. He was 'stuck' on this country. He went back to Norway and was married. He wanted to come back and homestead in the Red River Valley but his wife would get so seasick he was afraid that she would die on the trip over.

BOAT TRIP Father came over on a sailboat in about 1872 or '73. He was gone for about three years.

Father encouraged them to go to the U.S., but it was really hard for their mother to see them go.

GRANDPARENTS Maternal grandmother, Laurensa Selvig who had broken her hip and walked with a crutch. Maternal grandfather was Ivar Selvig who did some fishing. They lived in the HÅ,le community in place called Selvig.

PATERNAL GRANDPARENTS Jacob and Rakel. He did fishing too. They lived on a small island and there was just one family that lived there. They talked about dividing the island so that Elias' father and his brother could both live in the same place, but Elias' father went to Stavanger instead. This was the island of Veholmen, which was about an hour's ride by boat from Stavanger. The island had a lot of wood on it. Now the island has been sold. Lost a lot of their connection with home when the youngest brother died in 1979. The only connections they have now are with Ole's wife's family.

FAMILY HOME Outside of Stavanger. Close to the North Sea. Could see the storms. Describes the waves as mountains fighting each other.

SCHOOL DAYS Went for seven years. Walked to school in all weather. Wore wooden shoes.

CHURCH All baptized and confirmed in the same church. Elias was married in this same church. This was the Domkirke (the same as Cathedral) in Stavanger.

WORK Worked on the farm until he was confirmed. After he was confirmed he worked at a potato mill in Stavanger where they made potato flour. He also had to do chores at home because his father was getting ill (heart problems).

MILL WORK Had to be there at 7am. Worked six days a week for ten hours a day. Started when he was 16.

CHRISTMAS IN NORWAY Similar celebration to here, but they would walk around the Christmas tree and sing songs. There were just a few presents. Went to church Christmas morning. Special foods on Christmas Eve they had risengrynsgrøt (rice pudding) and on Christmas Day they had roast.

TRIP TO U.S. Was 19 when he left on 14 March 1914. Came alone to his brother, Louie in Belfield, ND.

REASONS FOR EMIGRATION 'When one sheep jump over the cliff, the rest of them follow.' They all wanted to go to the U.S. and their father liked to see them go. They all went, but Magnus. Magnus was the one still in Norway when his father died. Nellie, the youngest girl, came to the U.S. then too.

MOTHER She died in 1912. She saw all the children leave except Elias. The day she died they got a telegram from Kristiansand that Kornelius, who had been in Alaska fishing would be home the next day. He knew she was sick.

FEELINGS ABOUT EMIGRATION Didn't bother him a bit. Liked to leave Norway and come home. Something new. Liked it here right at first.

TRAIN TRAVEL Got lunch packages at stops. Immigrants got a lot of help. Couldn't speak English, but most of the time there was someone around who had been here before to help.

BOAT TRIP Rough over the North Sea from Bergen to Newcastle, England. They were locked up down below. This was before the Scandinavian American Line; there was no direct route. Went by rail to Southampton and from there they took the Olympic which was the sister ship of the Titanic. Took 36 hours from Bergen, Norway to Newcastle, England and five days from Southampton, England to New York. Wasn't seasick.

SHIPBOARD ENTERTAINMENT Dancing all day long, drinking, and even church.

NEW YORK Taken first to Ellis Island and checked then someone came and took them all to the railway station. Then they were in the hands of the conductor. Always someone who looked after them. Went to Belfield, ND, which is about 125 miles west of Bismarck, ND. Brother met him at 2am.

WORK After coming in at 2am he had to get up and go to work at 7am. He has worked ever since. He worked on the railroad section for 15 cents an hour for tens hours a day. Poor wages only enough to pay for board and work clothes. There was no future in it. Worked there for a while and got to be section boss and then you made good wages, \$80 a month. He lived with his brother for a while, but then the railroad found out they were related and they moved to Elias to another area.

BROTHER He was a section boss for 45 years. He retired in 1950 and came out to Seattle and lived on his pension. He died when 95 years old. Was in the Josephine Sunset Home in Stanwood, Washington for a while.

LANGUAGE Took about a year to get it down enough to get along pretty well. Worked with many foreigners who all spoke English. His boss was American and that helped a lot. He worked with Italians, Greeks, and Turks in the summertime, but in the wintertime they were all white. The railroad would get these laborers cheap for the summer and sent them home in the winter.

RAILROAD UNION Put a stop to this practice of bringing in workers. Roosevelt put a stop to this union because it was a company union and then they were able to get a more powerful union. Talks about unions now and how they are never satisfied and that they have no limits and how we can be competitive at these costs. Stayed with the railroad for 20 years.

VISITS TO NORWAY Went in 1927 just because he wanted to take a trip. It was on this trip that he met his wife. She was a sister to his sister-in-law. He later went back to marry her. Her name was Gudrun Hauge.

NORTH DAKOTA They settled in N. Dakota and had children but the summers were too hot and the winters too cold. Elias said he wouldn't stay there. He would either go back to Norway or move to the coast.

WEST COAST He had been out here before and knew what it was like. He came out on a vacation to visit his sister and brother out here in 1926. Talks about the house they have now and that he had seen it then. They moved out in 1937.

CHILDREN The youngest child was born out here and the others were born in the east. Kjell was born in Billings, Montana. John was born in Bismarck, ND and Gudveig in Glendive, Montana.

Moved a lot because of work. People were laid off or bumped by someone. The railroad furnished housing sometimes. They were perfectly satisfied when they got settled in the west.

FARMING AND CLEARING LAND Started farming and clearing land, worked hard. They have been dairy farmers. They sold milk to Darigold. They started selling with cans and then came tanks and refrigeration. Quit selling when he was 71 years old. He now rents out the farmland.

CITIZENSHIP About 1935 when they were living in Stipek, Montana. This was the same year that Gudveig was born in the hospital in Glendive, Montana. Waited so long because they were young and happy-go-lucky. Had to study first. Had books he studied from and there was a woman who helped them. They never asked very many questions. The judge just talked and showed them pictures of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln and asked if they knew who they were. There was one sticky question when he asked if the senators should be elected by the people or the judges. He was afraid he might be turned down if he didn't say judges, but he wasn't.

SCANDINAVIAN ORGANIZATIONS Hasn't belonged to any of the organizations. Always too busy.

CHURCH Only organization he ever belonged to. Not particularly active. Elias believed that churches and schools belong to the Americans, he got all his education and ideas in Norway.

SCHOOL Was on the school board for a few weeks. Didn't feel he belonged there because he had only seven years of education. 'Let the Americans have it.'

VISITS TO NORWAY Hasn't gone back since 1930. There was some changes then, many foreigners, many more buildings, part of the home place is sold out in house lots.

USE OF NORWEGIAN Can still speak it. Spoke Norwegian when the children were small. Then they started speaking English when the kids went to school. The children learned English fast.

Talks about wages and the hard work in the early days and compares that to today.

SPOKEN NORWEGIAN Recites the Lord's Prayer in Norwegian.