



# All that I hold Dear: A Young Immigrant in New York City, 1911-1916

*Helga Hansen*

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When she arrived in New York City in 1907, Helga Hansen was just eighteen years old—armed with domestic skills, a deep faith in God, and not much else. But it wasn't long before she found work as a waitress and chambermaid, serving well-to-do Manhattanites on the Upper West Side.

Throughout this time, Helga secured new friendships and pined for her family back in Norway. She witnessed the opening of the Grand Central terminal, was devastated by news of World War I, fell in love, and laid the foundation for her own family.

And from 1911 to 1916, she also recorded the ins and outs of her life in daily diary entries, ones that would tell a compelling story of courage, faith, and the immigrant experience of the twentieth century.

Unearthed for the first time in nearly one hundred years, Helga's journals were discovered in an old steamer trunk by her granddaughter Ruth Kolbjornsen Nybro—who lovingly translated and recorded each and every candid entry.

The result is an authentic firsthand look at the life of a young immigrant woman determined to make ends meet as she deals with the demands of wealthy employers, periods of uncertainty and loneliness, and the complexities of love and family.

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