

## Finding Aid to the Erling N. Rolfsrud Papers

### **Rolfsrud, Erling N., 1912-1994**

Erling N. Rolfsrud Papers, 1948-1968

6.8 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 64

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[Biography](#)

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[Box and Folder List](#)

### **OVERVIEW**

**Links:** Finding aid to later accession of [Erling N. Rolfsrud Papers](#)  
Finding Aid to the [Erling N. Rolfsrud Photograph Collection](#).

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

**Provenance:** Donated by Mr. Rolfsrud, 1950, 1951, 1952, and 1979 (Accessions 4, 6, 2038).

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

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**Citation:** [Identification of item]. Erling Nicolai Rolfsrud Papers, MS 64, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Erling Nicolai Rolfsrud was born September 3, 1912, near Keene, North Dakota on the farm of his parents Nils and Rebecca (Heide) Rolfsrud. He attended Watford City High School and graduated from there in 1930. He briefly attended Minot State College, and then taught rural schools for three years in McKenzie County. He attended Concordia College at Moorhead, Minnesota and received a Bachelor's

degree in 1936. Mr. Rolfsrud was on the staff of the North Dakota Education Association for several years, and in 1939 he began writing a column titled "Top Drawer" for its journal *North Dakota Teacher*, which he continued writing for twenty-two years. In 1941 he married Beverly Brown of Hettinger, N.D. That same year, he began teaching typing and shorthand classes at Concordia College, and headed the Department of Business Education at Concordia until 1946. After his tenure at Concordia, Mr. Rolfsrud spent eleven years as a freelance writer and produced over ten books. During this period, he lived near Deerwood and Alexandria, Minnesota, where he continued to reside until the time of his death. In 1952, he was a lyceum lecturer for one year in North Dakota schools, and spoke about North Dakota history, and "Extraordinary North Dakotans". In 1957, he began teaching English at Evansville High School, transferred to Alexandria High School, which he continued to teach until 1978. Mr. Rolfsrud also taught an Adult Education Creative Writing course in Alexandria.

Mr. Rolfsrud was a prolific writer who wrote articles and short stories, as well as newspaper columns for several North Dakota and Minnesota newspapers. He is an author who published 31 books from 1949-1993, many of which are about North Dakota and have North Dakota settings. He may best be remembered for his books on North Dakota. Some of his better known books include: *Lanterns Over the Prairies*, Book I (1949), *Lanterns Over the Prairies*, Book II (1950), *Gopher Tails for Papa* (1951), *White Angakok* (1952), *Brother to the Eagle* (1952) *Extraordinary North Dakotans* (1954), *Boy from Johnny Butte*, (1954) *Cobber Chronicle* (1966), *Story of Red River Land* (1967), *Flickertail Stories*(1989), and *Petticoat Pioneer* (1993).

In addition to his writing, Mr. Rolfsrud traveled the state of North Dakota giving speeches and lectures on his writing and the state's history. Mr. Rolfsrud also taught a Bethel Bible class, and was a church organist for forty years. In 1965 Mr. Rolfsrud was selected as one of the seventy-five 'Heroes' in North Dakota's history, and in 1989 he was inducted into North Dakota's Scandinavian-American Hall of Fame. Mr. Rolfsrud died August 21, 1994 at Alexandria, Minnesota. He was survived by his wife and six children.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Erling Nicolai Rolfsrud Papers consist almost exclusively of the manuscripts and research notes for several of Mr. Rolfsrud's books including *Brother to the Eagle*, *Creative Writing*, *Extraordinary North Dakotans*, *Fifty Years of Country Storekeeping*, *Gopher Tails for Papa*, *Indians of the Upper Midwest*, *Lanterns Over the Prairies*, Books I and II, *Story of Red River Land*, *Story of North Dakota*, *Tiger-lily Years*, and *White Angakok*. A later donation of papers was received. Consult the finding aid to that collection (Mss 194) for the scope and content of those papers.

The [Brother to the Eagle Series](#) documents the biographical work on Carl Ben Eielson, pioneer Alaskan aviator and Hatton, N.D. native. The series includes extensive research correspondence, newspaper clippings, and research notes. There is also a typed manuscript of the book as well as two galleys.

The [Creative Writing Series](#) is for a course workbook written for the North Dakota Division of Supervised Study and aimed at high school students as a correspondence course. Mr. Rolfsrud was also

the instructor for the course until 1968. The files include correspondence, a manuscript of the course book as well as a copy of the final manual and tests.

The [Extraordinary North Dakotans Series](#) is for a book containing a collection of biographical sketches about famous, unique and unusual North Dakotans. This series contains some correspondence but the major portion is the research files on each subject included in the book. These files usually contain correspondence, research material, and a draft of the final article. The files have been organized alphabetically. In addition there are some comments on the manuscript as well as a galley of the book.

[Fifty Years of Country Storekeeping Series](#) is for a book written by M. A. Johnson of Larimore of Larimore, North Dakota, concerning the Johnson Stores Company, which he founded. Mr. Rolfsrud assisted in the editing of Mr. Johnson's manuscript. This series consists almost entirely of correspondence between the two concerning the editorial process. There is also a file of advertisements used by the Johnson Stores and several pamphlets issued by the Johnson Stores.

The [Gopher Tails for Papa Series](#) contains a typed copy of the final manuscript for the book.

[Indians of the Upper Midwest Series](#) book was written basically for a student audience as an introduction to Indians and their culture. The series consists of some correspondence and extensive research files. These files are divided by subject and listed separately in the container list. In addition, there are copies of the book manuscript, the typewritten master used to print it by offset, and some of the drawings used in the book.

The [Lanterns over the Prairies Series](#) documents two volumes of *Lanterns over the Prairies* that were published by Mr. Rolfsrud which contain biographical sketches of "those ordinary folks who lived extraordinary lives" in North Dakota. The series contains some correspondence, the research file for each biography and manuscripts, proofs and an unbound copy of volume two. Also included here are the files for persons who were not included in the two books. A complete name index has been compiled for these files and is located at the end of the register. The amount of information on any one individual varies considerably.

The [Story of Red River Land Series](#) is for a book written in connection with an educational series aired on the Fargo public television station which was directed towards students. This series includes files on the series outline, bibliographies, travel notes, potential visuals as well as the script for the television series, textbook manuscripts, and the teacher's manual. The major portion of this series is the research material collected and organized in a subject arrangement. These files are quite extensive and are not thoroughly processed. The "Great Names from Red River Land" files contain much biographical material on prominent persons both locally and nationally.

The [Story of North Dakota Series](#) is the largest series in the collection and deals with Mr. Rolfsrud's book on the history of the state, published in 1963. There are extensive correspondence files, bibliographies, maps, and newspaper clippings. The research material is very extensive with all, other than for three general files, arranged by the chapter headings in the book. Some files are missing. The

series also includes a copy of the manuscript, criticisms on the manuscript, a galley and two mock-ups. The signatures are also included.

For the [Tiger-lily Years Series](#) and [White Angakok Series](#) there are only typed manuscripts. Tiger-lily Years is an auto-biographical work dealing with the childhood years of Mr. Rolfsrud in the 1920s. *White Angakok* is a biography of Hans Egede, first missionary to Greenland.

## BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder	Contents
1/1	Biographical material, and Finding aid
	<b><i>Brother to the Eagle Series</i></b>
	Research Correspondence—
1/2	1948-1950
1/3	1951
1/4	1952
1/5	1953-1959
1/6	Bibliography
1/7	Chronology of life
1/8	Newspaper clippings
1/9	Pamphlets
1/10	Research notes
1/11	Research notes
1/12	Research notes (Antarctica)
1/13	Research notes
1/14	Research notes on <i>Flying North</i> by Jean Potter Manuscript
1/15	Preface by Sir Hubert Wilkins
1/16	Chapters 1-3
1/17	Chapters 4-6
1/18	Chapters 7-9
1/19	Chapters 10-12
1/20	Chapters 13-15
1/21	Chapters 16-18
1/22	Chapters 19-21
1/23	Chapters 22-24
1/24	Chapters 25-28
1/25	Epilogue, Chronology and Appendix
1/26	Galley
1/27	Galley

### ***Creative Writing Series***

- 2/1 Correspondence, 1956-1958
- 2/2 Course Manuscript
- 2/3 Course book and tests

***Extraordinary North Dakotans Series***

- 2/4 Correspondence, 1950-1954
- Biographical subjects research files—
  - 2/5 Elizabeth P. Anderson
  - 2/6 Reverend I. J. Backenberg
  - 2/7 Mustache Maud Black
  - 2/8 Paul Broste
  - 2/9 Anne Carlsen
  - 2/10 John Christiansen
  - 2/11 Leila Ewen
  - 2/12 Anna Fisher
  - 2/13 Frank Fiske
  - 2/14 Reverend Oliver Goldie
  - 2/15 James Grassick
  - 2/16 Judge Gudmundar Grimson
  - 2/17 Josephine Grinnell
  - 2/18 Gunnysack Bill
  - 2/19 Dennis Hannafin
  - 2/20 Tom Hansen
  - 2/21 Mark L. Hanson
  - 2/22 Captain E. E. Heerman
  - 2/23 Charley Hoffman (Rising Bear)
  - 2/24 Laura Taylor Hughes
  - 2/25 Jimmie Janonsek
  - 3/1 Liver-eating Johnson
  - 3/2 M. A. Johnson
  - 3/3 Mr. and Mrs. Henry Kolschevar
  - 3/4 Florence Klingensmith
  - 3/5 Emil Krauth
  - 3/6 Hans Langseth
  - 3/7 Edward Lanning
  - 3/8 Grace Layton
  - 3/9 Ida Bisek Prokop Lee
  - 3/10 Harry McLean
  - 3/11 Joseph Messer
  - 3/12 Eugene Nelson
  - 3/13 Minnie J. Nielson
  - 3/14 Casper Oimoen
  - 3/15 Ole "The Hermit" Olson
  - 3/16 Einar Olstad
  - 3/17 Clarence Putnam
  - 3/18 Carl Rauk
  - 3/19 Red Tomahawk
  - 3/20 Budd Reeve
  - 3/21 Thelma Rudser
  - 3/22 Harold Schafer

3/23 John Sutherland Sinclair  
 3/24 Janet Smaltz (Moblie Clinic)  
 3/25 Jim Somers  
 3/26 Morgan Spenser  
 3/27 Dr. V. H. Stickney & Dorothy Stickney  
 3/28 Hans Thorpe  
 3/29 Belle Thompson Webster  
 3/30 Marie Downing Williams  
 4/1 James W. Zaharee  
 4/2 "Doc" F. R. Zahl  
 4/3 Frank B. Zahn  
 4/4 Manuscript comments  
 4/5 Galley

***Fifty Years of Country Store Keeping Series***

Correspondence—  
 4/6 1952-1954  
 4/7 Feb. - June 1955  
 4/8 July - Dec. 1955  
 4/9 1956  
 4/10 Advertisements  
 4/11 Pamphlets  
 4/12 ***Gopher Tails For Papa Series*** – Manuscript

***Indians of the Upper Midwest Series***

Correspondence  
 4/13 1963, 1970  
 4/14 1971  
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 4/16 Bureau of Indian Affairs  
 4/17 Burial  
 4/18 Chippewas  
 5/1 Clothes  
 5/2 Communication  
 5/3 Contributions  
 5/4 Dwellings  
 5/5 Earth Lodge Tribes  
 5/6 Equipment, tools  
 5/7 Education  
 5/8 Food  
 5/9 Games, recreation  
 5/10 General  
 5/11 Indians today  
 5/12 Noted Indians  
 5/13 Organizations  
 5/14 Places of Indian interest  
 5/15 Population statistics

5/16 Religion, beliefs, philosophy  
 5/17 Reservations  
 5/18 Sioux  
 5/19 Warfare, hunting  
 5/20 Manuscript  
 6/1 Manuscript  
 6/2 Photo-ready master  
 6/3 Illustrations

***Lanterns over the Prairies Series***

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 6/5 Correspondence (candidates), 1950

Volume 1 Biography Research Files—

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 6/7 James W. Foley  
 6/8 Father Genin  
 6/9 M. Beatrice Johnstone  
 6/10 Dr. B. H. Kroeze  
 6/11 Captain Grant Marsh  
 6/12 Hazel Miner  
 6/13 Fannie Dunn Quain  
 6/14 Linda Warfel Slaughter  
 6/15 Enos Stutsman  
 6/16 Mrs. C. N. Swart  
 6/17 Joseph Henry Taylor  
 6/18 Oscar H. Will

Volume 2 Biography Research Files—

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 6/20 Charles Cavileer  
 7/1 "Uncle Will" Crocker  
 7/2 Fingal Enger  
 7/3 Eagle Woman (Mrs. Charles Galpin)  
 7/4 Reverend C. L. Hall  
 7/5 Fanny Heath  
 7/6 Edwin F. Ladd  
 7/7 Col. C. A. Lounsberry  
 7/8 Charles Talbott  
 7/9 Pall Thorlaksson  
 7/10 Zdena Trinká  
 7/11 C. B. and L. R. Waldron  
 7/12 Manuscript (Volume 1)  
 7/13 Manuscript (Volume 2)  
 7/14 Proofs (Volume 1)  
 7/15 Unbound copy (Volume 2)  
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 7/17 B  
 7/18 C  
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 10/11 Textbook manuscript (with comments)  
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 10/13 Textbook manuscript  
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 10/14 Lesson outlines manuscript  
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 10/17 Manuscript  
 10/18 Manuscript (final?)

***Story of North Dakota Series***

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 11/7 Howard Berg  
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