

Finding Aid to the Oscar A. Christensen Papers

Christensen, Oscar A., 1880-1976

Oscar A. Christensen papers, 1949-1959

.4 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 336

[Biography](#)

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OVERVIEW

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

Provenance: Donated by Oscar Christensen, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1955 and 1958 (Acc. 336).

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Citation: [Identification of item]. Oscar A. Christensen Papers, MS 336, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

BIOGRAPHY

Oscar Adolph Christensen was born February 20, 1880 to Otto A. and Mina K. Christensen at Moorhead Minnesota, the second of three children. He was a farmer and was active in early farm organizations including the Farmer's Union. He later resided at St. Paul, Minnesota. He married his wife, Julia, in 1923, and she died in 1960. He died January 25, 1976.

His father, Otto Augustus Christensen, was born July 28, 1851 in Lyons, Iowa, to Abraham and Catherine Christensen, immigrants from Lillesand, Norway. The family moved to Houston, Minnesota, where Mr. Christensen's father died in 1855. As his mother had to leave him to seek work, he was raised by foster

parents and later by his sister, Mathilda Bergland. In 1873, at age 21, he went to work in a lumber camp at Brunswick, Minnesota. Later he attended Caledonia Academy, was a cook for Lamb Brothers Brick Yard, and clerked for G.S. Barnes in Glyndon. He was the first teacher at Buffalo River School and was a clerk for James Sharp in Moorhead.

In 1875 he established a homestead at Oakport Landing and on October 14, 1877 he married Mina Juve of Buffalo River, Minnesota. They had three children; Amy, Oscar, and George Milton. In 1882, Mina died of pneumonia. In January 1890, the widower married his Danish housekeeper, Andrea Nielson, a widow with one daughter. They had eight children; Ruth Mina, John, Milton, Agnes Catherine, Clara, Daniel, and Lillian. On October 17, 1918, Mr. Christensen died of injuries received earlier in an automobile accident. He was buried at Riverside Cemetery in Moorhead.

He was a member of Sovereigns of Industry, and the Grange. He was the town clerk of Oakport for over 35 years. He was also active in the temperance movement, and in the Populist, and Socialist Parties.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The [Correspondence Series](#) is chiefly letters from Oscar Christensen to Leonard Sackett of the Institute. Of interest is one letter containing biographical information on the G.S. Barnes family (8-15-55). There are also copies of two 1889 letters to Otto Christensen.

The [Manuscript Series](#) include a typed carbon of the *Man Behind the Plow (Men Behind the Plow)* by Oscar Christensen, Section I. Pages 1-96, and Section II, pages 1-230. This is a history of pioneer life in Minnesota from the 1850's to 1939. It contains many excerpts from Otto Christensen's diary (1873-1875), and also from numerous letters written to and from the family and friends of the Christensens, notable Halvor Steenerson. Also included are many biographical sketches of pioneer families, and information on a variety of subjects including schools and churches, Enkesaeta, lyceums, the Loring farm, Farmer's Holiday, and Farmer's Union, "Telesoga", and experiences of immigrants. A brief reference guide to names and subjects has been compiled and is attached. The other manuscript, "Farmers Revolt" is a short reminiscence of an unknown person from August 1933 concerning the measures of the farmers to stop farm foreclosures.

Finally there is a copy of an I.W.W. song, "The Portland Revolution," several poems, and a U.S. Senate document of Russell W. Fridley's article, "A Sketch of Minnesota", 1958.

SEPARATION RECORD

The following non-manuscript items were removed from the Oscar A. Christensen papers and have been sent to the section indicated.

Books (Institute book collection, consult the main library catalog for call number and location).

The Man Behind the Plow, by Oscar A. Christensen, Crosslake, Minnesota, 1949.

Photographs (Institute photograph Collection)

3 photographs of the Otto A. Christensen family.

BOX/FOLDER	CONTENTS
1/1	Biographical material and finding aid
	Correspondence Series
1/2	Correspondence, 1889, 1955-59
	Manuscript Series
	<i>The Man Behind the Plow</i>
1/3	Section I, pp. 1-44 (and reference guide)
1/4	pp. 45-96
1/5	Section II, pp. 1-72 (and Introduction)
1/6	pp. 73-120
1/7	pp. 121-180
1/8	pp. 181-230
1/9	"Farmers Revolt"
1/10	Pamphlets, poetry, and songs