

## Finding Aid to the Stella H. Hohncke Papers

**Hohncke, Stella H.**, 1892-1989

Stella H. Hohncke Papers, 1930-1976

.4 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 165

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[Biography](#)

[Scope and Content](#)

[Box and Folder List](#)

### OVERVIEW

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

**Provenance:** Donated by the Hohncke family 1980 (Acc. 2271)

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**Citation:** [Identification of item]. Stella H. Hohncke Papers, MS 165, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

### BIOGRAPHY

Stella H. Halsten, a poet and writer, was born February 3, 1892, to Mr. and Mrs. J.O. Halsten on a homestead 10 miles northwest of Fargo, N.D., and educated in the Cass County schools. She married Wilbur K. Hohncke on September 21, 1918 in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and they lived in Fargo with their four children--James, John, Mary, and Shirley. Mr. Hohncke, born June 7, 1892 at Casselton, North Dakota, worked for Loomis Dry Cleaners and later owned the Shoe Repair and Harness Shop in Fargo. A fine harness maker, Wilbur made harnesses for people all over the country, and died April 29, 1970. Stella graduated from the Concordia Conservatory of Music, the Western School of Expression, and she received her high school diploma at the age of 70 through the North Dakota Division of Continuing

Studies in Fargo. She also attended a business college in Fargo, and studied drama at North Dakota State University. Stella worked for the Charley Page Insurance Company, and later for the Cosgriff Insurance Agency, both of Fargo.

Some of Mrs. Hohncke's poems were published in magazines, poetry booklets, and in *Stella's Poems*. Her work also appeared in *North Dakota Singing*, a collection of poems written by native writers. *Humbly We Pray*, a booklet of prayers by the members of the North Dakota branches of the National League of American Pen Women, was compiled by Stella when she was the state poetry chairman. A music teacher, Stella also performed musical selections and readings, as well as directed plays, pageants, and programs for community functions. She was a member of the Writers Section of the Fine Arts Club of Fargo, the North Dakota Poetry Association, the National League of American Pen Women, and the Cass County Hospital Board. Mrs. Hohncke read poems on KVOX radio's "Parade of the Poets" from approximately October 1939 to January 1940. Stella not only wrote plays, she performed in them, such as "Lignite"--a one act drama by Fargoan Lyle Phillips, "Club Spirit"--by Fargoan Mrs. Ella Gottschalk; and she appeared as Mrs. Cratchit in Dickens's "Christmas Carol." Stella died May 20, 1989 and is buried in Riverside Cemetery in Fargo.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The **Stella H. Hohncke Papers** document her active literary career, the author of plays, short stories, poems, and speeches. The Anna Thorsell articles written by Stella Hohncke, one of which appeared in *The Fargo Forum*, discuss Mrs. Thorsell's childhood on her father's farm in Denmark and her work in the Danish royal family's kitchens in Copenhagen. There are also scrapbooks on Stella's life and of the Hohncke family. The papers are organized into three series: Correspondence, Works by Stella H. Hohncke, and Subject files.

The [Correspondence Series](#) is divided into three subseries. The Incoming Correspondence from 1936-1958 consists primarily of postcards and letters of appreciation to Stella in reference to her KVOX program, "The Parade of Poets," as well as requests and permission to read listeners' poems. In addition to that are acceptance or rejection letters for Stella's poems from the Salvation Army in Chicago, Ill. and the Ideals Publishing Company in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The collection includes three payment stubs for the publishing of her poems. There is also a letter dated August 27, 1936 from O.E. Lien that states why he erected a statute for farmers south of Denhoff, North Dakota. Included also is a letter of membership into the National League of American Pen Women, and a letter from *The Prairie Wings*, the official organ of North Dakota Poetry Society, that gave Stella blanket permission to use poems printed in their magazine.

The Outgoing Correspondence from 1953-1955, 1971 contains letters to the Salvation Army, Ideals Publishing Company, and to Nora about Ole Olson's manuscript.

The Family Correspondence includes a letter written on United States Senate letterhead from William Langer dated May 7, 1957, in reference to his hospital stay. Also included is a B.P.O. Elks #260 Lodge Christmas Party notice, and a 1969 Christmas mimeograph letter from the Christiansons in Granville, North Dakota.

The [Works by Stella Series](#) is divided into five subseries: plays, short stories, poems, speech, and Thorsell. The Plays Subseries consists of eight plays of various themes, one of which is more of a Christmas pageant, and an untitled play consisting only of the second page. One of the plays, "Voice of the Past," depicts the birth and development of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) movement in North Dakota, as well as mentioning the establishment of the national PTA by Alice McLellan Birney.

The Short Stories Subseries contains fifteen stories of various subjects; however, the majority of the stories have a religious theme. "The Maccabees" includes background notes, compiled by Stella, of the study of the Maccabees that she arranged in chronological order from 586 B.C. into 134 B.C. Only the second page of "The Jester's Sword" exists, while the collection contains an untitled story about Humpty Dumpty.

The Poems Subseries is divided into four files; A-S, 1950-1958, T-Z, 1930, 1935, 1950-1956, 1970, undated, and untitled. A number of the poems have a religious theme, and other poems are about nature and the seasons, love and home. There are also several whimsical poems such as "Tribute to a Pig." The collection also includes undated and untitled poems.

The Speech Subseries contains a program for a Mother and Daughter Banquet in which Stella gave a speech about pioneer mothers' lives.

The Anna Thorsell Subseries consists of two articles about Mrs. L.L. Thorsell, one of which appeared in *The Fargo Forum* on February 14, 1937, and a later article, as told to Stella Hohncke, that appeared in the December 4, 1954 issue of *Dakota Farmer*. The latter article not only discusses Mrs. Thorsell's childhood on her father's farm in Denmark, but also includes her work in the Danish royal family's kitchens in Copenhagen. The article also mentions two of King Christian IX's daughters, Queen Alexandria of England and Empress Marie of Russia. Part of the Empress' large entourage was six of her chefs that cooked in the Danish kitchens, and both the Russian chefs and the Danish kitchen staff conversed with each other in French.

The [Subject File Series](#) is divided into four files that are arranged alphabetically. The Awards file, from 1936, 1940, 1974, contains newspaper articles that include a reception for contributors to *North Dakota Singing*, honorable mention in the North Dakota Division of the National Thanksgiving Poetry Association's contest, and the Model Laundry winners' names and pictures in its city wide Letter Writing Contest. In addition to that, is a newspaper article about Stella's graduation from high school at the age of 70, and an article in *Midweek* about her Woman of the Year Award for Continuing Service when Stella was 82 years old.

The Family file includes newspaper articles, from 1937-1941, 1976, about Stella's son John, and pictures of the 1940 and 1941 Graduating Class of Central High School. Her mother's obituary states that Mrs. J. O. Halsten emigrated from Norway, and not only was Mrs. Halsten one of the first homesteaders in Cass County, she was the last living charter member of the Herby Maple Sheyenne Lutheran Church.

The General file, from 1931-1937, 1954, contains a newspaper article about Stella's radio broadcast, "The Parade of Poets," over KVOX Tuesday and Thursday evenings at 7:05 P.M. from approximately October 1939 to January 1940. There also is a typewritten account of the 75th Anniversary of the Maple Sheyenne Congregation and its founding history. The article goes on to mention that the first settlers to the area were August and Hans Haglund in 1871. A newspaper article by Mrs. C.E. Backlund of Lisbon, North Dakota, reprinted from *The Rotarian Magazine*, which tells about the life of a country editor's wife, is also in the collection. Mrs. Backlund's husband, one of the oldest active printers in North Dakota, was foreman of the *Ransom County Gazette and Free Press* (Lisbon), and set his first type in 1890. A newspaper article titled "Hanson" mentions Stella's radio broadcast as well as Mrs. Backlund's book, *The Lonely Road*. A *Fargo Forum* article mentions that Stella gave a program of musical selections and readings for the Chautauqua in Spiritwood Lake.

The Programs file includes programs from events that Stella Halsten took part in, such as a student recital in 1917 for the Western School of Expression in which she played the piano, and a reading she did for Miss Florence Ford's Music Class in 1918. There is a 1919 program for a Graduate Recital of the Western School of Expression and the Dakota Conservatory of Music in which Stella was a reader and pianist. Other programs list Easter plays, as well as a pageant arranged by Mrs. Hohncke. The North Dakota Clubwoman newsletter, dated November, 1931, contains a picture of the cast members (including Stella) of the play, "Club Spirit," and a 1953 Easter program from the Parkview United Church in Stratford, Ontario that lists Stella's poem, "The Garden Beautiful."

The Poems (collected) file consists of three folders of poems that Stella collected and saved: 1936, 1939-1941, 1950-1971, and undated. The collected poems deal with a variety of themes, such as religion, nature and seasons, as well as life, love, and friends.

Scrapbook 1 (1910-1934) contains a variety of items ranging from collected poems, mementos and newspaper articles on the Hohncke family, early settlers at Arthur, North Dakota including Bruno Mergner, on the origins of popular hymns, as well, as obituaries of Sirena Dalrymple and her daughter, Mrs. M. Hines. There are also calendars for 1910 and 1921.

Scrapbook 2 (1928-1939) consists of various newspaper articles that tell of different works by Stella Hohncke, as well as that she was a cast member in plays such as "Lignite." There are newspaper articles on the Hohncke family and on others such as James Foley, North Dakota's Poet Laureate. The file also contains collected poems and a program of Dickens's "Christmas Carol," a play in which Stella was a cast member.

The Cornelia Spelletich file consists of a carbon copy of a typewritten manuscript for her work *Chronicles of Cornelia*, a book about Cornelia's childhood in a log cabin on the family's homestead in Minnesota, which was published in 1955. It appears to be the final draft. According to the Hohncke family Stella helped edit the work.

## SEPARATIONS RECORD

The following non-manuscript material has been removed from the **Stella Hohncke** Papers and sent to the section indicated.

### Periodicals (Institute book collection)

- *Community Life*, June 1917 "Chautauqua Number"

### Pamphlets

- "ROTC Cadet Corps, NDAC, military tournament and graduation parade", May 28, 1940 (to NDSU Archives)
- "Emma - a Play" by Marion Morse
- "MacKaye, 1941" (to NDSU Archives)

### Broadsides (Institute broadside collection)

- "April 21, Earth Day"
- "Racing Program, North Dakota State Fair for Fargo"
- "Opera House, Casselton, Friday, December 27, *Quo Vaidis*"
- "Dedication of the Sibley Crossing and Annual Commercial Club picnic, Sunday, September 1, 1935" (Kindred, ND)

### Photographs (Institute photograph collection)

- 3 photographic prints of Mrs. Hohneke
- 2 negatives of Mrs. Hohneke

## BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder	Content
1/1	Biographical material, and Finding aid
	<b>Correspondence Series</b>
1/2	Incoming, 1936-1958
1/3	Outgoing, 1953-1955, 1971
1/4	Family, 1957, 1969
	<b>Works by Stella H. Hohncke Series</b>
	Plays-
1/5	A Trip to Mother Goose Land
1/6	And When the Days
1/7	Just Folks
1/8	The Christmas Gift
1/9	The Coming of Spring

- 1/10 The Search  
 1/11 Voice of the Past  
 1/12 Untitled
- Short Stories-
- 1/13 A Matter of Stops  
 1/14 Grandmother's Letter  
 1/15 Hello Inga  
 1/16 Much Will be Required  
 1/17 Soul Equipment  
 1/18 The Dummy at Bridge  
 1/19 The Gift  
 1/20 The Householder  
 1/21 The Humper Guddy and the Day  
 1/22 The Jester's Sword  
 1/23 The Macabees  
 1/24 The Tribute  
 1/25 What are the Good Things  
 1/26 When the Violin Sang  
 1/27 Untitled
- Poems-
- 1/28 A-S, 1950-1958  
 1/29 T-Z, 1930, 1935, 1950-1956, 1970  
 1/30 Undated  
 1/31 Untitled
- 1/32 Speech  
 1/33 Thoresell, Anna articles, 1937, 1954

### **Subject File Series**

- 1/34 Awards, 1936, 1940, 1974  
 1/35 Family, 1937-1941, 1976  
 1/36 General, 1931-1937, 1954  
 1/37 Piano recitals, readings, and pageant programs, 1917-1935  
 1/38 Poems (collected), 1936, 1939-1941  
 1/39 Poems (collected), 1950-1971  
 1/40 Poems (collected), Undated  
 1/41 Spelletich, Cornelia - *Chronicles of Cornelia* manuscript  
 2/1 Scrapbook 1, 1910-1934  
 2/2 Scrapbook 2, 1928-1939