

Finding Aid to the Eva Nelson Papers

Nelson, Eva, 1914-1998

Eva Nelson Papers, 1909-1998 (bulk 1930-1998)

2 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 293

[Biography](#)

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OVERVIEW

Links: Finding Aid to the [Eva Nelson Photograph Collection](#)
Finding Aid to the [Eva Nelson Memoirs](#)

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

Provenance: Donated by Rodney Nelson, 2006 (Acc. 2783).

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

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Citation: [Identification of item].Eva Nelson Papers, MS 293, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

BIOGRAPHY

Eva Gunderson was born in Noonan, North Dakota, on May 12, 1914, the eldest of five children. Her parents, Ole S. and Signe (Johnson) Gunderson, moved several times, finally settling near Christine, where Eva graduated from high school in 1930. Upon graduation, Eva worked as a maid in her home area and in Fargo for several years before she received her teaching certificate from Moorhead Teachers College in 1937. Eva began her teaching career the following year in a one-room schoolhouse in central

North Dakota and continued as an educator for thirty years. In January 1941, Eva married Rudolph A. Nelson. They had two children—Rodney and Barbara. Rudy and Eva were divorced in 1956. After retiring from teaching in 1978, Eva began her second career as writer and historian. She wrote her memoirs, completed family trees, and helped to organize the Christine High School reunions held in 1980 and 1983. Eva (Gunderson) Nelson died October 23, 1998.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Eva L. Nelson Papers were donated by Eva's son, Rodney Nelson. An earlier accession, Institute Mss 218, includes Eva Nelson's memoirs, which are supplemented with photographs, letters, and other materials. She created her memoirs with the aid of her diaries, letters, and other written material. This collection is comprised of Eva's personal papers and has been arranged into the following five series: Diaries, Correspondence, Manuscripts & Publications, Memorabilia, and the Financial Records.

The [Diaries Series](#) has been arranged chronologically and spans the years 1942 to 1998; however, there are some gaps. Diaries from 1943 through 1961 do not exist in this collection except for a single entry on loose-leaf paper dated August 14, 1958 (originally dated 1959 and subsequently crossed out). The diaries covering the years 1982 through 1985 were lost, according to Eva's records, in the midst of moving in the spring of 1986. In entries beginning on November 14, 1987 (written on loose-leaf paper), Eva tried to reconstruct her memories of those years. The existing diaries provide a detailed account of Eva's daily life. She often wrote in several diaries at once, keeping daily accounts of her activities as well as more reflective entries covering longer periods of time. Eva also tended to reread her entries over time and annotate them—these annotations are almost always dated.

The [Correspondence Series](#) comprises mostly outgoing correspondence from Eva to her family and friends, although a few incoming letters can be found within this series. Eva's original order was maintained during processing; the letters are arranged chronologically, but Eva also grouped them and created titles for these groups, which indicates that Eva spent a great deal of time and effort organizing her biographical materials, likely while writing her memoirs. Most of the letters were stored in manila envelopes on which she recorded notes. These envelopes have been retained and are the first item in each folder.

The original order is useable, but because it does not differentiate between incoming and outgoing correspondence, some description at the folder level is necessary. For example, the "Johnson Letters" file contains correspondence from friends and family to Signe (Johnson) Gunderson, Eva's mother. This is routine correspondence about daily activities such as buying a new car, making career changes, and other family decisions. There are two letters in Norwegian.

The "1941" file contains only a few letters. According to her own notes, on February 22, 1991, Eva discarded all the other letters from this period of her life. The first item in this folder is the manila envelope on which Eva explained her actions. The existing letters describe the first few months of Eva & Rudy's married life and Eva's pregnancy.

The “War-Time Seattle Letters” file spans the years 1943 to 1945. Included is correspondence to Signe Gunderson from her sister, Esther Ditmarson. In one letter, Esther suggested that Eva and Rudy move to Seattle to find war-industry work. Eva and Rudy did eventually move to Seattle, and the largest segment of letters from 1944 and 1945 are from Eva to her family.

The remaining correspondence files contain mostly outgoing correspondence from Eva to her family and friends.

The [Manuscripts & Publications Series](#) is arranged chronologically and contains published and unpublished materials such as general interest articles, book reviews, and stories. The earliest manuscript in this series, *The Eldorado Star*, was an illustrated magazine that Eva created as a high school student. Later in life, Eva wrote regularly for local and regional publications such as the *Dakota Farmer*, *County Press*, and the *Christine Newsletter*. The topics for these articles were often taken from her own life experience. The folder labeled “Unpublished Manuscripts” includes old college term papers and articles. In 1993, after attending a musical in Medora, North Dakota, Eva wrote “Moon Over Medora,” original lyrics set to the tune “Moon Over Miami.”

The [Memorabilia Series](#) contains items Eva saved from her high school, college, and early teaching careers. She made the art projects in one of her college education classes. Eva saved several of her report cards and other school souvenirs, including high school reunion memorabilia. This series is arranged alphabetically by topic.

The [Financial Records Series](#) is arranged chronologically and is an incomplete series. There are major gaps in her financial documentation. This series includes a mix of budget books, tax returns, and other financial information.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder	Contents
1/1	Finding aid
	Diaries Series
1/2	07/09/1942 – 09/29/1942
1/3	09/30/1942 – 12/31/1942
1/4	08/14/1958
1/5	04/08/1962 – 03/13/1965
1/6	12/29/1963 – 01/02/1965
1/7	01/01/1965 – 01/06/1966
1/8	01/02/1966 – 12/31/1966
1/9	03/04/1966 – 04/15/1973
1/10	01/01/1967 – 01/06/1968

1/11	01/03/1968 – 01/15/1969
1/12	01/16/1969 – 01/01/1970
1/13	01/02/1970 – 01/01/1971
1/14	01/02/1971 – 01/01/1972
1/15	02/20/1972 – 12/31/1972
1/16	12/31/1972 – 01/05/1974
1/17	07/22/1973 – 07/22/1978
1/18	12/30/1973 – 12/31/1974
1/19	01/01/1976 – 12/31/1976
1/20	01/01/1977 – 12/31/1977
1/21	01/01/1978 – 12/31/1978
1/22	11/11/1978 – 12/31/1981
1/23	01/01/1979 – 12/31/1979
1/24	01/01/1986 – 12/31/1990
1/25	11/16/1986 – 01/01/1987
1/26	01/02/1987 – 12/31/1987
1/27	11/14/1987 – 09/29/1997
1/28	01/01/1991 – 12/31/1996
1/29	01/01/1996 – 08/12/1998

Correspondence Series

1/30	Johnson Letters, 1909-1959, undated
1/31	1941
1/32	War-Time Seattle Letters, 1943 (has newspaper clippings)
1/33	War-Time Seattle Letters, 1944
1/34	War-Time Seattle Letters, 1945
2/1	The Firehall Story, 1948-1953
2/2	1952-1954, undated
2/3	The Monmouth-Seattle Story, 1953
2/4	The Monmouth-Seattle Story, 1954
2/5	The Parshall Story, 1954-1956
2/6	The Church House Story, 1956-1958
2/7	1959
2/8	Horace Letters, 1960, undated
2/9	618 S. University Drive Letters, 1960-1962
2/10	Ann Montgomery Letters, 1985-1990
2/11	Christmas Letters, 1993-1994

Manuscripts & Publications Series

2/12	The Eldorado Star, 1928-1929
2/13	<i>Dakota Farmer</i> Articles, 1962-1968
2/14	<i>County Press</i> Article, 1974

- 2/15 Book Reviews, 1975, undated
- 2/16 *The Back Forty* Article, 1979
- 2/17 *Christine Community Newsletter* Articles, 1980-1986
- 2/18 Unpublished Material, 1983-1986, undated
- 2/19 News article, "The County Choir," 1990
- 2/20 Moon Over Medora (song lyrics), 1993
- 2/21 Interview with George Holland, undated
- 2/22 *Christine Newsletter* Articles, Unpublished Memoir, 1982-1990, undated

Memorabilia Series

- 2/23 Art Projects, 1930s
- 2/24 Certificate, NDMF, 1995
- 2/25 Christine High School Girls' Basketball Team Photo, 1936
- 2/26 Christine High School Reunions, 1974, 1980, 1989
- 2/27 Manuscripts, 1930, undated
- 2/28 Milestone List, 1982
- 2/29 *Red River Valley Days*, Special Edition insert, 1986
- 2/30 Report Cards, 1920-1925, 1929-1930
- 2/31 School Souvenirs, 1902, 1903, 1921, 1929, 1937

Financial Records Series

- 2/32 Mar. 1942 – Apr. 1955
- 2/33 Tax Returns, 1955-1957; 1965-1972
- 2/34 Budget Books, 1944, 1945, 1952, 1958