

Finding Aid to the North Dakota School of Religion Records

North Dakota School of Religion

North Dakota School of Religion Records, 1921-1977

1.1 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 46

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OVERVIEW

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

Provenance: Donated by Corwin Roach, 1977 and John Helgeland, 1985 (Acc. 2123).

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Citation: [Identification of item]. North Dakota School of Religion Records, MS 46, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo

HISTORY

The Wesley College School of Religion was opened fall term of 1921 at the North Dakota Agriculture College by the Wesley College of Grand Forks. This school's course offerings included the history, literature, philosophy, and psychology of religion. Wesley College, then affiliated with the University of North Dakota and previously located in Wahpeton as the Red River Valley University, gave financial support to the School and the NDAC gave the School's courses academic credit. Under the directorship of Walter Lee Airheart, the school's course enrollment increased from four students in 1921 to 253 students in 1929.

In 1931, two serious problems threatened the school's existence. That year the Fargo-Moorhead Lutheran Pastoral Union protested the school's use of NDAC classrooms. The Union said this violated the separation of church and state doctrine. Also that year, Wesley College experienced financial difficulty and was forced to withdraw its funding to the school. In January of 1932, Airheart and sixteen other Fargo businessmen organized the Fargo School of Religious Education, a private corporation. The school's purpose was to continue non-sectarian, non-denominational religious education at the NDAC. Walter Stockwell was elected the first president of the Board of Trustees, and Airheart was elected the first secretary and director of the school. The school sought private contributions for its financial support. In 1936, a donation from Mr. and Mrs. S. Fred Knight allowed the School to construct a new building on land leased from Wesley College at 1247 North 13th Street (University Drive).

The school continued its work under the directorship of Airheart until his death in 1944. W.C. Hunter became the acting director until Stafford Studer was hired in 1946. In 1960, Corwin Roach took over as director until his retirement in 1977. The school was renamed the North Dakota School of Religion in 1962. In 1971 Wesley College donated to the school the land the school's building was on. In 1973 the school donated its land and building to the NDSU Development Foundation. The foundation agreed to operate the school as it was for two years. After that time the foundation agreed to maintain a Professor of Religion position through a Department of Religion at NDSU. Since 1977, John Helgeland has been the Professor of Religion at NDSU and the director of the North Dakota School of Religion.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The North Dakota School of Religion records consist primarily of the records from the school's different directors, Airheart, Hunter, Studer, and Roach. The papers have been organized into five series" articles of incorporation and bylaws, meeting minutes, correspondence, reports, and subject files. There are a number of versions of articles of incorporation bylaws, amendments, and proposed amendments, spanning from 1932 to 1962.

The [Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes Series](#) begins in 1931. While the trustees were less active after the mid 1960s, nonetheless minutes are nearly complete. The minutes document the official business conducted by the board on behalf of the school.

The [Correspondence Series](#) is the largest series with Airheart's years the most complete. The correspondence is both incoming and outgoing, and is mainly the correspondence of the directors and some trustees, especially Walter Stockwell.

The [Report Series](#) includes the director's reports to the board of trustees and the financial reports of the school. The director's reports tell of the school's enrollments, courses, and activities. They are fairly complete from 1947 to 1977. The monthly financial reports are complete from 1932 to 1936. From 1937 to 1967 the reports not nearly as complete.

The [Subject File Series](#) contains a variety of material arranged alphabetically by topic, including alumni lists, audit reports for 1959-1962, assorted board of trustees membership lists, and a graduate paper by

Don Lee Mickey titled "An Analysis of the Policy Making Function of the Board of Trustees of the Fargo School of Religious Education from 1931-1946."

The Broadway Trust Fund controversy file material concerns possible mishandling of funds when the school arranged for proceeds of the Broadway Methodist Church sale to be used for construction of the new building. The file is incomplete, but it communicates the general story. The building specifications, contracts, dedication, and alterations file includes the only record of the words said for the new building's dedication

In the course records, offerings, and enrollments file is the grade sheet from Airheart's first classes in 1921. The file is very incomplete. The next files are fund raising lists, land and building appraisals, and land documents. The land documents file contains the 1932 lease from Wesley College, a statement concerning the donation of the land to the school in 1971, and the document giving the land and building to the NDSU Development Foundation on 1973. The next two files contain miscellaneous financial records and newsletters printed from 1948 to 1950. The newspaper clippings file and the pamphlet file contains printed information about the school, its history, and its programs. The four-page radio speech by Airheart was part of the 1936 fund raising effort. There is one document each from the Religious Education Council for the Agricultural College and the NDAC Council of Religious Staff. The religious education-general file contains five different articles on topics like "The Discovery and Development of Moral and Spiritual Values in Education." The resolutions, sermons file contains board of trustee resolutions in memory of deceased members or friends and also a copy of the funeral sermon delivered for Airheart by Dr. John C. Irwin.

The School of Religion general information file contains a variety of materials written to give information about the school. It is not a complete file, but it is helpful. The Wesley College file is a miscellaneous collection of information including a copy of the Frank Lynch offer to give \$100,000 to Wesley College. There is also a letter signed by Airheart, A. Roe, and R.A. Lanthrop calling for the elimination of President Emeritus E.P. Robertson from Wesley College affairs.

SEPARATION RECORDS

The following non-manuscript material has been removed from the North Dakota School of Religion and sent to the sections indicated:

Books (Institute book collection)

- *Students experiences significant for religious education*, by Walter Lee Airheart, 1934
- *An analysis of the policy making function of the Board of Trustees of the Fargo School of Religious Education from 1931 to 1946*, by Don Lee Mickey, 1954

Photographs (Institute photographic collection)

- Two framed pictures of Walter Stockwell and Walter Lee Airheart.

Broadsides (Institute broadside collection)

- Three-page blue prints for schools building, by William F. Kurke, 1936.

Artifacts (Institute artifacts collection)

- Embossing seal for the North Dakota School of Religion.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder	Contents
1/1	Historical material, and Finding aid
1/2	Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, 1932, 1949, 1953, 1961, 1962
Meeting Minutes Series	
1/3	1931-1941
1/4	1942-1949
1/5	1950-1977
Correspondence Series	
1/6	1926-1931
1/7	1932
1/8	1933-1934
1/9	1935-Feb. 1936
1/10	Nov. 1936 - Dec 1936
1/11	1937-1939
1/12	1940-1942
1/13	1943-June 1945
1/14	July 1945-1946
1/15	1947-June 1948
1/16	July 1948-1949
1/17	1950-1952
2/1	1953-1957
2/2	1958-1959
2/3	1960
2/4	1961-1962
2/5	1963-1977
Reports Series	
2/6	Director's Reports, 1947-1957, 1961-1977
2/7	Financial Reports, 1924-1967, 1973
Subject Files Series	
2/8	Alumni List, 1922-1949
2/9	Audit Reports, 1959-1962
2/10	Board of Trustees Membership Lists, 1932?, 1938-1962, 1974

- 2/11 Board of Trustees study by Don Lee Mickey, 1954
- 2/12 Broadway Church Trust Fund Controversy, 1932-1939
- 2/13 Building Specifications, Contracts, Dedication, and Alteration, 1936-1937, 1954-1962
- 2/14 Course Records, Offerings, and Enrollments, 1921-1922, 1936, 1941, 1948-1950, 1958, 1977
- 2/15 Fund Raising Lists, 1933-1958
- 3/1 Land and Building Appraisals, 1959, 1963
- 3/2 Land Documents, 1925, 1932, 1945, 1948, 1971, 1973
- 3/3 Miscellaneous Financial Papers, 1932, 1937, 1959, 1961, 1963
- 3/4 Newsletters, 1948-1950
- 3/5 Newspaper Clipping, 1931-1938, 1945-1950, 1958-1960, 1966, 1974
- 3/6 Pamphlets, 1925-1955, 1975
- 3/7 Radio Speech by Airheart, 1936
- 3/8 Religious Educational Council, and Council of Religious staff, 1937
- 3/9 Religious Education - General, 1949, 1957?, 1958?
- 3/10 Resolutions, Sermon, 1936, 1944, 1948, 1965, 1966, 1977?
- 3/13 Roach, Corwin, 1964-1966
- 3/11 School of Religion - General Information, 1930, 1935, 1942-1953, 1970?
- 3/12 Wesley College, 1919, 1924- 1938, 1958