

Finding Aid to the Ole A. Olson Papers

Olson, Ole A., 1878-1980

Ole A. Olson Papers, 1950s-1968, 1980

.2 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 79

[Biography](#)

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OVERVIEW

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

Provenance: Donated by Mr. Olson, 1952 and 1969 (Acc. 24)

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BIOGRAPHY

Ole A. Olson was born 26 November 1878 at Tvedestrand, Norway, the eldest son of Andreas Olson and Berthe Elene Guttormson, In 1882 Ole came to the United States with his mother and brother to Redfield, South Dakota, There Andreas had homesteaded the year before. After struggling against drought and poor prices, the family in 1890 moved to Morris, Minnesota. After various employments Ole Olson homesteaded near Big Sandy, Montana in 1913. There he married a neighboring homesteader, Stella Lavina Henderson on December 17, 1916. In 1917 they moved to Fargo, North Dakota where he worked for H.H. Berg's tractor business until moving in 1921 to Fergus Falls, Minnesota. There he was a farm

loan inspector for a mortgage company. They returned to Fargo in 1913 where they lived since. Mr. Olson was a farm manager and insurance salesman until his retirement in 1947.

Mr. & Mrs. Olson had two sons, Norris A. Olson and Roger H. Olson. Both Mr. & Mrs. were known for their poetry and other writings, Mrs., Olson was at one time associate editor of *Prairie Wings*, a north Dakota poetry journal, Mr. Olson's poem, "To those Who Plowed with a Walker," was published in 1966 in the Congressional Record. Mrs. Olson died in 1966 and Mr. Olson on September 14, 1980

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The **Ole A. Olson Papers** consist of his autobiography, several poems by himself and others, and his manuscript, "One Day on a Territorial Homestead."

The **Autobiography Series** contains a detailed account of Mr. Olson's life beginning with his parents in Norway and ending in 1968. It is the original typescript copy running about 230 pages (there are no pages 52-61). He began writing the autobiography in 1965 and gives a very detailed, chronological history of his life. He compiled a chronological index to subjects concerned in the work which is helpful to date events as well as finding various subjects. He also included numerous poems written by himself for which there is a separate index. The autobiography is a very good account of life in Norway, pioneer life, homesteading in Montana, his employment history, travelogues, and the illness and death of his wife.

The **Subject Files Series** contains two files of poems. The Miscellaneous File includes "Farmin' in Dakota," by Mortimer C. Brown, and "Old, Gone Forever Days," by William Mikkelson. The file of poems by Mr. Olson includes, "A Big Christmas- 1887," "Fifty Years in Dakota," "To Those who plowed with a walking plow," and "Four Score and Ten." "One Day on a Territorial Homestead" is a 27 page typed story by Mr. Olson. Although he fictionalized the names of the characters, it is a true story of his parents, himself and his brother and sister. It takes place during a blizzard in January 1888 on their homestead in South Dakota. It documents the hardships of the family during a blizzard but the main theme is the resentment of Mrs. Andreas Olson for their coming to America to a region which the Indians didn't even want. It concludes with her realizing the treasure she had in her husband and family

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder	Contents
1/1	Biographical material, and Finding aid
	Autobiography Series
1/2	Title page - page 51
1/3	pages 62-100
1/4	pages 101-150A
1/5	pages 152-200
1/6	pages 201-238
1/7	Index and miscellaneous pages

Subject Files Series

1/8 Miscellaneous poems
1/9 "One Day on a Territorial Homestead
1/10 Poems by Mr. Olson