NDSU Institute for Regional Studies & University Archives North Dakota State University Libraries

Home

Finding Aid to the North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies Records

North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies records, 1950-present 14 linear ft.

History

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OVERVIEW

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

Provenance: University records transfer.

Property rights: The University Archives owns the property rights to this collection.

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Citation: [Identification of item]. North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies Records, University Archives, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

HISTORY

After arriving on campus in 1949, G. Ernst Giesecke, Dean of the School of Applied Arts and Sciences at North Dakota Agricultural College, began developing the idea for the North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies. Giesecke envisioned that such an organization would enable the faculty to do original research focusing on the Upper Great Plains and, in the process, better themselves as teachers. Once the idea received the support a few faculty members, a rough outline of the plan was presented to the President of North Dakota Agricultural College, Fred Hultz, who told them to continue with their plans.

After further planning and being approved by the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education in March 1950, the North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies was formally founded later that year. The founders were: Giesecke, O. A. Stevens, H. Dean Stallings, William C. Hunter, E. A. Helgeson, Rudolf

Otterson and Kenneth Kuhn. The founders developed four basic principles to serve as guides for the direction of the Institute: First, to stimulate research into the region's resources and culture; second, to provide a center for research; third, to encourage artistic expression of life on the plains; and fourth to assist in disseminating results of significant work.

In order to assist in the dissemination of significant work, the Institute started its own publishing program. The first book was The Handbook of North Dakota Plants written by Professor O.A. Stevens and published in 1950. Dr. Leo Hertel, Professor of Modern Languages, served as the Institute's editor for many years and was succeeded by Dr. Bill Reid, Professor of History, in the 1970s. Originally the publishing program was under the direction of the Institute staff, but over the years the Dean Office's of the College of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences assumed more responsibility and now has assumed full control over the publishing program.

The Institute provided a center for research through the creation of its archives. The Institute received its first donation of historical documents in 1950 and shortly after Dr. Hunter received release time from teaching to manage the archives. Dr. Leonard Sackett, Professor of English and Chairman of the Committee for the Preservation of Historical Documents, became responsible for acquiring further records. The Institute began to collect bonanza farm records in 1953 and Dr. Sackett collected many business records as well as photographs relating to the bonanza farm era. The Institute's effort in collecting bonanza farm records led to a good librarianship award from the Mountain Plains Library Association.

The Institute has remained focused on collecting all aspects of the state's past, but has been especially successful in collecting records focused on agriculture, literary figures, the pioneer era, women, and social history resources. With the continued expansion of the archives and the retirement of Dr. Hunter, Dr. Reid was appointed University and Institute archivist in 1971 while maintaining his teaching duties. In 1975, John E. Bye was appointed the first full time archivist marking a significant change in the operation of the Institute archives. Also at this time the NDSU Library assumed complete responsibility for the Institute archive function.

The Institute founder's also attempted to stimulate interest in the region through a variety of activities. One of the first attempts was a train that traveled throughout the state bringing the history and the ideas behind the Institute to the people. After using the train, they held art shows to display the talents of North Dakota artists, one of the first being Elmer Halvorsen in 1952. Einar Olstad followed Halvorsen two years later. Olstad's paintings focused on the everyday life of a rancher. The Institute also held Local History Day, which was an attempt to teach people how to preserve documents and an attempt to aid people in the writing of local history. The Institute, with the aid of a monetary gift, created the Young Memorial Scholarship that was rewarded to students who researched and wrote exceptional papers on regional interests and topics.

In 1995 the Institute created a website, the first of any North Dakota archives, and revamped it in 1998. Also, the entire Institute's archival and many of its photograph collections are part of a national catalog database.

The aggressive collecting campaign began by the founders, to obtain personal and business records, books, and other materials relating to North Dakota, has been continued with great success. Presently the Institute has had over 3,000 donations of records and other material. The collection break down to the following broad subject categories: Agriculture, Bonanza Farms and Land Development; Architecture and Historic Preservation; Business; Cass County, N.D.; City of Fargo, N.D.; Education; Fargo, N.D.; Lawrence Welk; Legal; Literary, Music and Theater; Local and Ethnic History; Medicine and Health Care; Military; Natural History; Personal and Family Papers; Pioneer Life; Politics and Government; Religion; Social Issues; Sports and Recreation; Women and Women's Organizations. Along with the manuscript collection, the Institute houses an impressive collection of photographs dealing with North Dakota. The collection contains over 150,000 prints and negatives covering such topics as North Dakota towns and the bonanza era.

There are two administrative heads of the Institute. Dr. Kent L. Sandstrom (2011- present), Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, is also the Co-Director of the North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies Publications. Dr. Ross Collins, Professor of Communications, is the senior editor (1995-present). Michele M. Reid (2008-present), Dean of the Libraries, is the Co-Director of the Institute for Regional Studies Archives.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Institute's records consist of correspondence, memoranda, meeting minutes, and Institute publications, and an oversized flat boxes with some material not elsewhere noted. The majority of the collection consists of unpublished and published manuscripts. The collection is broken down into nine series: History, Organization/Committee, Executive Secretary/Director, Memoranda and Meeting Minutes, Projects, Archives Annual Reports, Archives, Unpublished Manuscripts, and Publications.

The **History Series** spans the years 1950 to 2000. Included are newspaper clippings from the Fargo Forum, Spectrum, and other newspapers documenting the Institute's progression. There are several items of interest. The first is a term paper written by an NDSU history graduate student documenting the Institute's first twenty years of operation. The second item is the draft memo and completed memo written by Dean Archer Jones, Director of the Institute and Dean of the School of Arts and Social Sciences, in the mid 1970s. Jones called for the liquidation of the Institute and for its various collection to be divided up between the University of North Dakota, Concordia College, and Moorehead State University. One final item is the grant the Institute received to partake in the Library of Congress American Memory web project. The project involved placing photographs on the Institute's website as well as the Library of Congress' website. The Institute received the grant along with schools such as Yale and other Ivy League institutions.

The **Organization/Committee Series** covers the early development of the Institute. The organization files cover how the planners structured the committees and determined their tax status. The committee files illustrate how the Institute planned to best meet the needs of the public and scholars and planned to best continue its expansion. The established committees ranged from scholarship to foundations to Institute Development to manuscript acquisitions.

The **Executive Secretary/Director Series** consists of correspondence and covers the years 1951 to 1975 with the bulk covering the early 1950s. Dean Giesecke served as the executive secretary when the

Institute was first founded and much of the correspondence in this series comes from him. The earlier correspondence illustrates the attempts of the founders to build the Institute along the lines of similar archives and research centers. There is correspondence with Harvard, Stanford, and other institutions asking for newsletters and pamphlets they had regarding their archives and centers. The early correspondence also contains several letters to other Great Plains universities notifying them of the Institute's creation and purposes. The founders also marketed the Institute to Harvard through a letter of inquiry by asking if their master and doctoral candidates were required to write theses and dissertations and, if so, the Institute had records relating to the marketing of agricultural products.

The **Memoranda and Meeting Minutes Series** primarily covers the first ten years of the Institute with a few scattered records dating from the 1960s and 1970s. The most inclusive minutes cover the years 1950 to 1959 when the Board of Directors met quite frequently. There is another good run of meeting minutes in the mid 1970s. The memoranda best cover the early years when the Institute was forming its various committees. The memoranda consist mainly of requests to professors to serve on different committees and meeting announcements.

The **Project Series** is the second largest series and covers the early years of the Institute when it was attempting to build its collection and attempting to expand peoples' understanding of North Dakota. The records in this series document the founders' attempts to start a press, to promote the Institute in scholarly journals and through projects that would attract public attention, to find additional funds through monetary gifts, and to stimulate research in North Dakota topics by awarding scholarships. The Institute sponsored several gallery exhibitions of North Dakota artists, one of the first being Elmer Halvorson. Another project involved school children gathering oral histories for pioneers and early settlers with prizes going to the top three in their respective grades. Projects also included authors the Institute worked with as the acquisition committee attempted to obtain the authors' research notes and other personal papers.

The **Archives Annual Reports Series** begins with the first report issued in 1972 and continues up to 1990. After 1990 there are gaps in the reports with donations of non-manuscript items receiving the best coverage. The reports contain information on the number of donations received by the Institute, number of collections processed, number of visitors each month, and the number of requests for photographs and other materials.

The **Archives Series** consists of documents that relate directly to the operation of the Institute archives. The series contains a manual with the proper procedures for processing a manuscript collection and the Institute's loan agreement with other archives concerning the lending of manuscripts and other collections. Also included in this series are the Institute's accession book that documents when the collection was donated, what the collection consists of, and who donated the collection.

The **Unpublished Manuscript Series** consists of correspondence and several book drafts. The majority of the correspondence is from the 1950s when the Institute first offered publishing services for researchers. Many letters are requests to have manuscripts reviewed for publication by the Institute editorial staff. The most complete collection of an unpublished manuscript is that of "A Life in Garnet"

which was later published by a different organization under the title Vikings of the Prairie: Three North Dakota Settlers Reminisce by N.C. Hagen.

The **Publications Series** contains the books, monographs and reports published by the Institute. The series begins with Institute's first publication the Handbook of North Dakota Plants by Professor O. A. Stevens published in 1950 and continues with each subsequent publication. The series contains correspondence between the author and the Institute, the Institute and the publisher, the various drafts of the manuscript, and the book as it was published. Unfortunately, not all the books and monographs are accompanied by correspondence and the different drafts, especially those published from the mid 1970s to the present. Finally, there are gaps in the series where a copy of the book is not available, but an empty folder is included in anticipation of finding a copy.

The oversized flat box, at the end of the records, contains copies of Unwanted Bread: The Challenge of Farming and Ranching, 2000, by Green, Sheldon & James Coomber and The Promise of Water, 2002 by Gudmundson, Wayne (photographs) & Robert Silberman (Essay), due to their size. In addition, also due to size are the following items: Hudson, Lois Philip. Conscious. Poem. Broadside Number Three – 1995; Lamar, Howard R. Persistent Frontier. Broadside Number 4 – 1995; a laserdisc titled: From the northern prairies : guide to the visual collections of the North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1991. Drache. "The Naked Prairie" – book cover painting. n.d.; Trees and Shrubs of the Northern Plains, 1965. Hoag, Donald G. – mock-up; The Valley Comes of Age: A History of Agriculture in the Valley of the Red River of the North, 1812-1920. 1967. Murray, Stanely Norman. Map sheets for book.; and Scanning the Land: Poems in North Dakota, 1980. Lyons, Richard. Book Jacket preliminary mock-up.

BOX AND FOLDER LISTING

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- 1/3 North Dakota Agricultural College catalog—Institute for Regional Studies
- 1/4 Institute history
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- 1/6 Institute informational pamphlets
- 1/7 Twentieth anniversary
- 1/8 Twentieth anniversary invitation
- 1/9 Twentieth anniversary program brochures
- 1/10 Twentieth anniversary guest book
- 1/11 Twentieth anniversary tapes and speakers
- 1/12 Giesecke's address at Twentieth anniversary celebration
- 1/13 "An idea, experiment, and success: A History of the Institute for Regional Studies"

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- 1/15 Fiftieth anniversary invitation
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- 1/18 Institute liquidation proposal—January 8, 1974
- 1/19 Reflections on Dean Jones' proposed liquidation of the Institute
- 1/20 "The North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies: A Critical Review"
- 1/21 "60 Years of Service: Newly Established Institute for Regional Studies"
- 1/21a NDSU Archives Open House, February 15, 2018
- 1/22b 1957 Fargo Tornado Book Talk, May 10, 2018
- 1/22 Potential endowment, 1987
- 1/23 Reorganization, 1988
- 1/24 John Bye interview, n.d
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- 1/32 Institute Web, March 1996
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- 1/63 Executive secretary—National Geographical Society correspondence
- 1/64 Executive secretary—American Council of Learned Society correspondence
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- 1/67 Executive secretary—G.B. Gunlogson correspondence
- 1/68 Executive secretary—Public agencies correspondence
- 1/69 Executive secretary—Miscellaneous correspondence
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- 1/71 Executive secretary—Friends of the Middle Border (similar projects)
- 1/72 Executive secretary—Great Plains Agricultural Council (similar projects)
- 1/73 Executive secretary—Great Plains Foundation (similar projects)
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- 1/75 Executive secretary—Kansas State College (similar projects)
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- 1/84 Executive secretary—Theodore Roosevelt Nature and Historical Association (similar projects)
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- 3/66 "Your Archives Working for You: Second Annual Report of the Archives Function of the Institute for Regional Studies," July 1972-June 1973
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- 3/80 Accessions, books and pamphlets, 1950-1956
- 3/81 Accessions, pictures and maps (including atlases)
- 4/1 Original, handwritten accession listing of Institute holdings
- 4/2 North Dakota Biography Index: finding aid for card index
- 4/2a Institute for Regional Studies Newsletter—Spring 2000
- 4/2b Institute for Regional Studies Newsletter—Fall 2001

Unpublished Manuscript Series

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- 4/4 Manuscripts received and reviewed correspondence, May 1954-1981
- 4/5 Lund Publishing correspondence regarding potential publishing projects
- 4/6 Book binding specifications
- 4/7 Institute Reprint Series
- 4/8 Institute Annual correspondence
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Publications Series

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Handbook of North Dakota Plants, 1950. Stevens, Orin Alva

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- 4/38 Handbook of North Dakota Plants copyright
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- 4/45a Handbook of North Dakota Plants—First Edition 1951 with dust jacket (publication copy)
- 4/46 Handbook of North Dakota Plants—Second Edition 1963 no dust jacket (publication copy)
- 4/47 "Call Back Yesterday: How to Preserve and Write the Record of Our Regional Heritage," n.d., Sackett, Leonard

Stackers of Wheat, 1951. Lyons, Richard & Sand, Prudence Gearey

- 4/48 Stackers of Wheat correspondence
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Measure of My Days, 1953. Raaen, Aagot

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Modern Sagas: The Story of the Icelanders in North America, 1953. Walters, Thorstina (Jackson)

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- 5/18 Modern Sagas-typewritten manuscript-pages 1-77
- 5/19 Modern Sagas-typewritten manuscript-pages 78-154
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- 6/15 Geography of North Dakota corrections and suggestions for first draft
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- 6/17 Geography of North Dakota comments
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