Finding Aid to the

Nelson, Rodney, 1941-
Rodney Nelson papers, 1971-1990
.6 linear ft.
Collection number: Mss 229

OVERVIEW

Links: Finding aid to later accession of Rodney Nelson Papers

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


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

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Citation: [Identification of item]. Rodney Nelson Papers (1971-1990), MS 229, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

BIOGRAPHY

Rodney Allen Nelson was born on November 13, 1941, to Rudolph A. Nelson and Eva L. (Gunderson) Nelson in Fargo, North Dakota. His mother’s parents were longtime residents of Christine, North Dakota.

Nelson grew up in Fargo and Christine. After graduating from Fargo Central High he attended several colleges without taking a degree. He served in the U.S. Navy in the early sixties as a musician. After his military service he lived in San Francisco, where he was involved in Vietnam War protests. Nelson

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection of Rodney Nelson’s papers includes correspondence, reviews and articles, published prose and poetry, editorials, and translations. The collection also includes original transcripts of Villy Sadness, Skogmann: A Play in Five Acts, and The Nature Society. It contains a manuscript of the novel Home River, which was published in 1984 by the North Dakota Institute For Regional Studies, as well as a handwritten outline titled Red River. Nelson’s interest in the Norwegian-American writer and editor Simon Johnson accounts for certain photographs, articles, and music in his papers. An incomplete list of publishing credits can be found at the end of folder eight.

The Correspondence Series contains correspondence, both incoming and outgoing. The correspondence covers from 1971 to 1990 and is arranged chronologically. The collection includes correspondence with publishers, editors, other writers, friends, and fans.

The Articles Series contains articles written about Nelson. These articles are, for the most part, newspaper stories from local and regional newspapers spanning 1975 through 1987. They look at his work as an editor and writer. This series also contains a folder of reviews and articles written about Villy Sadness. A third folder contains reviews of and articles about The Boots Brevik Saga, Oregon Scroll, Vigil, and Home River.

The Published Works Series consists of some of Nelson’s published writings organized by type of writing, with folders containing reviews, poetry, prose, undated prose, editorials, and translations. He wrote reviews, poetry, fiction, and miscellaneous nonfiction. The poetry in this collection was published in newspapers, journals, and magazines. There is a partial list of publishing credits at the end of the folder eight, the published poetry folder. The prose in this collection includes essays, short stories, and a travelogue. The folder containing editorials includes writing about maintenance of Island Park, a piece of sculpture that was placed on the former Fargo Public Library site, and a controversy about using taste aversion to keep wolves from eating livestock. This series also contains translations of Wilhelm Lehmann, Oscar Loerke, and Simon Johnson.

The Manuscript Series contains both typescripts and manuscripts. These include Villy Sadness, Skogmann: A Play In Five Acts, and The Nature Society. There also is a handwritten outline titled Red
River that appears to have been the early working title for Home River. The manuscript for Early North is 134 leaves and contains six stories including “Karl Iversen,” “The Junipers,” “Immediate Earth,” “When Bjornson Came to La Crosse,” “The Devil and the Hedins,” and “Mita Hoda.”

The Subject File Series consists of pictures of Simon Johnson, his family, and his home. S.A. Gunderson of Portland, North Dakota, Nelson’s cousin, took these pictures. It also contains articles about Simon Johnson and music with lyrics by Johnson. This folder also contains an application for grant money to translate Simon Johnson’s writing.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

1/1 Finding aid

Correspondence Series

1/2 1971–1984
1/3 1985–1990

Articles Series

1/4 Articles about Rodney Nelson, 1975–1987
1/5 Articles and reviews about Villy Sadness, 1987–1989
1/6 Articles and reviews about other work, 1977–1985

Published Works Series

1/7 Reviews by Rodney Nelson, 1974–1987
1/8 Published poetry, 1974–1981
1/9 Published prose, 1971–1989
1/10 Published prose, undated
1/11 Published editorials, 1975–1987

Manuscript Series

2/4 Early North (six narratives, one translated)
1/13 Villy Sadness, undated
1/14 Red River, undated
1/15 Home River, undated
2/1 Skogmann: A Play In Five Acts, 1973
2/2 The Nature Society, 1986
Subject File Series

2/3 Simon Johnson, 1979–1981