



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Manuscript Collections

O. E. ROLVAAG:
An Inventory of His Selected Papers

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

- Creator:** Rolvaag, O. E. (Ole Edvart), 1876-1931.
- Title:** Selected O. E. Rolvaag papers.
- Date:** Undated and 1896-1934.
- Abstract:** Microfilmed correspondence (undated and 1903-1934), diary (1896-ca. 1899), and beginnings of an autobiography (undated), as well as six original letters (1928-1931) of the acclaimed Norwegian American author and educator.
- Quantity:** 13 microfilm reels; and 1 folder, containing 6 items, in partial box.
- Location:** See Detailed Description section for shelf locations.

BIOGRAPHY OF O. E. ROLVAAG

Ole Edvart Rolvaag was born April 22, 1876 on Donna Island, Helgeland, Norway, the son of Peder Jakobsen and Ellerine Johanna (Olson). He immigrated to the United States in 1896, initially settling in South Dakota. He graduated (1901) from Augustana Academy (Canton, S. D.); received his B.A (1905) and M.A. (1910) degrees from St. Olaf College (Northfield, Minn.); and studied in Norway (1905-1906) at the University of Christiania (later Oslo). Rolvaag was professor and head of the Norwegian language and literature department at St. Olaf (1906-1931). He wrote novels depicting the Norwegian immigrant experience in the American Midwest, poems, and many nonfiction works. He was involved with a number of professional and cultural organizations, including the Norwegian-American Historical Association, which he helped to found (1925) and served as secretary and archivist (1925-1931).

Rolvaag married Jennie Marie Berdahl (July 9, 1908). They had two children who lived to adulthood: Ella Valborg and Karl Fritjof. Rolvaag died at Northfield on November 5, 1931.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION

Most of the papers consist of Rolvaag's correspondence with family members in the United States and Norway; his publishers and translators; literary friends and aspiring writers; colleagues, students, and friends at St. Olaf College; teachers, scholars, and students at other educational institutions; fellow members of at the Norwegian-American

Historical Association; members and representatives of other professional and cultural organizations; and personal friends. The letters concern family and personal matters; the sources, translation, publication, and sale of Rolvaag's writings; his literary concerns and the literary aspirations of others; the administration of St. Olaf College and his teaching there; the activities of the Norwegian-American Historical Association and other organizations; and Rolvaag's interest in the preservation of Norwegian culture and its place in American life.

The diary documents Rolvaag's immigration to the United States and expresses his thoughts and feelings. The autobiography recounts his childhood and youth in Norway.

RELATED MATERIALS

There is a large collection of Ole Edvart Rolvaag papers in the archives of the Norwegian-American Historical Association, Northfield, Minnesota, of which the microfilm reproductions in this collection appear to be selected portions.

INDEX TERMS

This collection is indexed under the following headings in the catalog of the Minnesota Historical Society. Researchers desiring materials about related topics, persons or places should search the catalog using these headings.

Topics:

Books--Minnesota.
Fiction--20th century.
Norwegian-American fiction.
Norwegian-American literature.
Norwegian Americans--Minnesota.
Publishers and publishing--Minnesota--Minneapolis.
Publishers and publishing--New York.

Places:

Northfield (Minn.).

Persons:

Ager, Trygve M. (Trygve Martinus), 1906-1975.
Ager, Waldemar, 1869-1941.
Alexis, Joseph E. A. (Joseph Emanuel Alexander), b. 1885.
Banning, Margaret Culkin, 1891-1982.
Berdahl, Andrew J.
Berdahl, Clarence A. (Clarence Arthur), 1890-1990.
Berdahl, John E.
Berg, C. F. (Christian Frederick).
Bergh, J. A. (Johan Arndt), 1847-1927.
Bjork, Kenneth O.
Blegen, Theodore Christian, 1891-1969.
Boe, L. W. (Lars Wilhelm), 1875-1942.
Boynton, Bessie Williams.

Colcord, Lincoln, 1883-1947.
Foote, Frederick David.
Gjerset, Knut, 1865-1936.
Haugen, Einar Ingvald, 1906-.
Heitmann, John.
Hetle, Erick, b. 1873.
Hoidale, Einar, 1870-1952.
Holand, Hjalmar Rued, 1872-1963.
Hommes, George P.
Jones, Carl Waring, 1887-1957.
Jorgenson, Theodore, 1894-
Knaplund, Paul, 1885-1964.
Larson, Laurence Marcellus, 1868-1938.
Morison, Samuel Eliot, 1887-1976.
Newburger, Gabriel F.
Olson, Julius E.
Osland, Birger, 1870-
Ostenso, Martha, 1900-1963.
Rasmussen, Gerhard, 1857-1943.
Ristad, D. G. (Ditlef Georgson), 1863-1938.
Roe, Herman, 1886-1961.
Rolvaag, Jennie Marie Berdahl.
Sandburg, Carl, 1878-1967.
Saxton, Eugene.
Shipstead, Henrik, 1881-1960.
Thompson, Johan Jorgen, 1881-.

Organizations:

Augsburg Publishing House.
H. Aschehoug & co. (W. Nygaard).
Harper & Brothers.
Norwegian-American Historical Association.
St. Olaf College.

Document Types:

Autobiographies.
Diaries.
Microforms.

Occupations:

Authors, American--Minnesota.
Novelists, American--Minnesota.
College administrators--Minnesota.
College teachers--Minnesota.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Preferred Citation:

[Indicate the cited item and/or series here]. Selected O. E. Rolvaag Papers.
Minnesota Historical Society.
See the Chicago Manual of Style for additional examples.

Microfilm Producer and Availability:

Produced by: Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Minn., 1955.
Available on interlibrary loan from the Minnesota Historical Society.

Accession Information:

Accession numbers: 7670; 9363; 10,343

Processing Information:

Processed by: Kathryn A. Johnson, June 1998; Deborah Kahn, July 2007
Catalog ID number: 1730549

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

Note to Researchers: To request materials, please note the location and reel numbers of the microfilm and the location of the box shown below.

Location	Reel	
M662	1	Correspondence, undated and 1903-1934. 12 reels and 1 partial reel. The correspondence for 1914-1920 on reel 1 is in chronological order. The letters for 1921-1931 on reels 1-9 are arranged by year and then roughly alphabetically by author within each year. The correspondence on the rest of reel 9, reels 10-12, and the first part of reel 13 is grouped by author; the letters for each author are in approximate chronological order. Letters to Rolvaag: 1914-1920. A-P, 1921.
M662	2	R-X, 1921. A-X, 1922. A (part), 1923.
M662	3	A (cont.)-X, 1923. A-W, 1924. A-B (part), 1925.
M662	4	B (cont.)-W, 1925. A-F, 1926.

Location M662	Reel 5	G-W, 1926. A-Holand (part), 1927.
Location M662	Reel 6	Holand (cont.)-W, 1927. A-L, 1928.
Location M662	Reel 7	M-W, 1928. A-M, 1929.
Location M662	Reel 8	N-X, 1929. A-S (part), 1930.
Location M662	Reel 9	S (part)-Y, 1930. A-W, 1931. Letters from Rolvaag to his colleagues in the Norwegian-American Historical Association, translators, and friends: Undated and 1907 – July 1925.
Location M662	Reel 10	August 1925-1930. Letters to Rolvaag from officers of the Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1930-1931. Letters to Rolvaag from publishers: H. Aschehoug & Co. (W. Nygaard), Oslo, 1915-1931; and 1924-1934 (addressed to Rolvaag and Jennie Rolvaag). Augsburg Publishing House, 1913-1928. Harper & Brothers, 1926-1931.
Location P400	Box 1	Letters from Rolvaag, 1928-1931. 1 folder, containing 6 items. Three detailed letters (Nov. 2, 4, 1928; March 13, 1930) to Eugene Saxton of Harper & Brothers concerning the Norwegian publication of <i>Peder Victorius</i> and its potential sales; sales of his novel <i>Giants in the Earth</i> ; the dramatization of <i>Giants in the Earth</i> by Professor Job of Carleton College; his illness and his hopes of obtaining the Nobel Prize in Literature. Another letter to Saxton (Nov. 11, 1931) from Rolvaag's widow, Jennie, tells of her husband's death. Other letters are to Marie Didelot, Minneapolis (undated), rejecting an invitation to an unnamed event and to Bertha L. Heilbron, editor of <i>Minnesota History</i>

magazine (June 25, 1931), declining an offer to review a book by Theodore C. Blegen.

Location M662	Reel 11	Letters from Rolvaag to John E. Berdahl, 1903-1906. Letters to Rolvaag from Berdahl family members, 1921-1931. Letters to Rolvaag from Lars W. Boe, 1921-1931. Letters to Rolvaag from Lincoln Colcord, 1926-1930. Letters and poems to Rolvaag from Gabriel Newburger: 1930.
Location M662	Reel 12	1931. Poems to Rolvaag from Gerhard Rasmussen, 1928-1931. Letters from Rolvaag to friends (enclosed in letters after 1931); and letters about Rolvaag, 1932, 1934. Letters to Rolvaag from Rolvaag family members in Norway, 1907-1931. Letters from Rolvaag to Jennie M. Rolvaag, 1918, 1920-1931. Letters from Rolvaag to Ella Valborg Rolvaag, undated and 1924-1931.
Location M662	Reel 13	Letters from Rolvaag to Karl Fritjof Rolvaag, 1924, 1928, 1931. Miscellaneous letters, 1931. Diary, 1896-ca. 1899. Autobiography, undated.