

**Collection Name:**

Knute Nelson papers, 1860-1966

Collection Number:

P0257

Extent:

1.2 cubic feet (3 archives boxes) and one flat box

Biography/History:

Knute Nelson was born in Vosse Elven, Norway, on February 2, 1843. In 1849 he and his widowed mother emigrated to the United States, settling first in Chicago (1849-1850), then in Dane County, Wisconsin, where he enlisted in the Fourth Wisconsin Cavalry Regiment (1861-1864) during the Civil War. Following the war he graduated from the Albion Academy and studied law in a Madison, Wisconsin, law office, being admitted to the bar in 1867 and then serving as a representative in the Wisconsin assembly (1868-1869).

In 1871 he moved with his family to Alexandria, Minnesota, where he practiced law while farming a homestead tract. He served as Douglas County attorney (1872-1874), Minnesota state senator (1875-1878), presidential elector (1880), University of Minnesota regent (1882-1893), and fifth district representative to Congress (1883-1889). He was elected governor of Minnesota in 1892 and 1894, which post he resigned in 1895 to run successfully for the United States Senate, where he remained until 1923. Nelson was chairman of the Senate judiciary committee and the senate committee on public lands, and was active on the commerce and Indian affairs committees. His most notable legislative measures included the Nelson Bankruptcy Act (1898) and the act creating the Department of Commerce and Labor (1902), and he was also active in the establishment of the Interstate Commerce Commission. Nelson also supported a low tariff, a federal income tax, Prohibition, the Sherman Act, and the League of Nations. He died on April 28, 1923, during his fifth senatorial term.

The above information was taken from the following sources: Dictionary of American Biography, vol. XIII (1934); Who Was Who in America, vol. I (1968); Minnesota Biographies (1912), Book of Minnesotans (1907), Minnesota Historical Society Collections, vol. XIII (August 1908).

The Minnesota Historical Society Archives contains a large collection of Knute Nelson.

Scope and Content:

Papers concerning a Norwegian-born attorney and statesman: Clippings, correspondence, genealogy, transcripts and translations of letters, and speeches. Papers include: Nelson's translation of the Norwegian Constitution (1895, 27 p.); Pedigree chart prepared by Ralph Rolland who shares some of the ancestry; clippings and copies of newspaper articles on



observances of the 150th anniversary of Nelson's birthday. "Program ved minnehøgtiti, 14. Aug. 19"; Transcripts of letters written by Nelson's mother to her mother (Dec. 23, 1863) and her niece (Dec. 8, 1868); and letters from Nelson to his cousin Anders Berge (1899-1923), collected by T.C. Blegen; other copies in the America Letters collection.

Nine Civil War letters translated by Nora O. Solum for Dr. Millard L. Gieske, Summer 1965. The letters were edited by Gieske and published in "Norwegian-American Studies," v.23 (1967) pp. 17-50 (along with letters written in English). The originals are in the Nelson Papers, Minnesota Historical Society Correspondence concerning the translation (some with Gerhard B. Naeseth and correspondents in Dane co.) includes considerable detail about the Drosvold/ Drogsvold family, including a questionnaire filled out by Annie Drosvold Norgarn.

Box	Folder	Description
1	1	About Nelson, 1899-1992 "Knut Nelson, Late a Senator from Minnesota: Memorial Addresses Delivered in Congress" (1925) addressed by: Henrik Shipstead, Henry Cabot Lodge, Francis E. Warren, Lee S. Overman, Joseph E. Ransdell, Wesley L. Jones, William J. Harris, Magnus Johnson.
1	2	Speeches, etc., 1876 -1921 "Remarks of Knute Nelson at the Centennial Celebration held at Alexandria, Minnesota (July 4, 1876); "Tale of Hon. Knute Nelson" (1888); "Tariff Reform speech of Hon. Knute Nelson" (1888); "Biennial Message of Gov. Knute Nelson" (1895); "United States Swamp Land Laws. Regulations and Decisions Thereunder" (1896); "Immigration Speech of Hon. Knute Nelson" (1896); "Filled Cheese Speech of Hon. Knute Nelson" (1896); "Uniform System of Bankruptcy Speech of Hon. Knute Nelson" (1897); "An Adverse Balance of Trade, and Not the Greenback, is the Cause of the Large Gold Withdrawal Speech of Hon. Knute Nelson" (1895); "Remarks of Sen. Nelson on the Necessity and Duty of Maintaining the Parity of our Money" (1898); "Affairs in Cuba Speech of Hon. Knute Nelson" (1898); "Remarks of Sen. Nelson on the Proposed Issue of an Additional \$150,000,000 of Treasury Notes" (1898); "Remarks of Sen. Nelson on the Bankruptcy Bill" (1898); "Speech of Hon. Knute Nelson delivered at Hallock, MN" (1898); "Speech of Sen. Knute Nelson on The Right to Acquire and Govern Additional Territory" (1899); "The Philippines: The Constitutional Power of Legislation Possessed by Congress, and the Limitations Upon such Power. Speech of Hon. Knute Nelson" (1902); "Railway Rate Regulation. The duties and powers of



Congress in the premises. Speech of Hon. Knute Nelson" (1906); "The Railway Rate Bill is not Unconstitutional. Speech of Hon. Knute Nelson" (1906); "Protect Depositors and Keep Reserves at home. The True Remedy for Panics. Speech of Hon. Knute Nelson" (1908); "Summary of Our Most Important Land Laws by Knute Nelson" (1909); "Bill Amending the Interstate Commerce Act. Speech of Hon. Knute Nelson (1910); "Speech of Hon. Knute Nelson delivered at Alexandria, MN. (1910); "Power of the Federal Government Over Development and Use of Water Power." (1912); "On the Unfair Discrimination in the Tariff Bill. Speech of Hon. Knute Nelson" (1913); "'How the Democratic Party Disfranchised the Republican Members of the Conference Committee on the Currency Bill.' Speech of Hon. Knute Nelson" (1913); "Life and Character of Abraham Lincoln. Remarks of Hon. Knute Nelson." (1918); "John Ericsson and the Battle of the Merrimac and Monitor. Speech of Hon. Knute Nelson" (1918); "Peace Treaty and League of Nations. Speech of Hon. Knute Nelson" (1919); "Conditions in Russia, Treaty of Peace and Reservations. Speech of Hon. Knute Nelson" (1919); "Remarks of Sen. Knute Nelson Upon the Knox Peace Resolution." (1921); "Remarks of Hon. Knute Nelson on the Obstacles to the Rival of the Languishing Industries of our County" (1921); "The Soldier's Bonus. Remarks of Hon. Knute Nelson" (1921). Program for the "First Annual Summer Outing. Thursday and Friday, Aug. 8 and 9, 1895. Alexandria, Minnesota. Alexandria Business Men's Association to the Editors of the Park Region.

1	3	Correspondence, 1883-1918
1	4	Pedigree, 1923-1930 Includes ribbon with medal from the Den Norske Storfest (1930); memorial brochure; photocopy of letter to Haldor Hanson. Added 4/26/11: panoramic photograph. Minnesota Den Norske Storfest, Minneapolis, MN. June 10-12, 1930.
1	5	America letters, 1863-1923
1	6	Solum translation of Nelson letters, 1861-1864
1	7	Clippings, 1883-1922
1	8	Clippings about death, 1923
1	9	Clippings, 1924-1992
2	1-8	Photographs, undated Alexandria, MN (unidentified people); Knut Nelson, brother, wife, Mother, Mary B. Dillon; Unidentified photos; Unidentified



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- photos-Wisconsin; Photo album, Christmas Cards; Alexandria, MN (street scenes); Family Home site in Alexandria, MN; and Norway.
- 3 1 Scroll: K. Nelson Statute, 1897
- 3 2 Scroll: "Ættartalet aat Guvernør og Senator Knute Nelson," undated Family tree.
- Folio Original campaign poster published by the Price-McGill Company, St. Paul, Minnesota, "Knute Nelson Republican Candidate for Governor 1892."