

Neel, Marvin H. Papers

Marvin H. Neel Papers
1933-1988



Title Statement

Neel, Marvin H. PapersMarvin H. Neel Papers, 1933-1988 Ms.2016.022

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.2016.022

Unit Date

1933-1988

Language

English .

Abstract

This collection includes biographical resources, ephemera, correspondence, and writings and woodcut prints by and related to Marvin H. Neel (1908-1978), created between 1933 and 1988.

Creator

Neel, Marvin H. (Marvin Harmon), 1908-1978

Creator

Presgraves, Jim

Extent

0.3 Cubic Feet 1 box

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from Marvin H. Neel Papers must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Acquisition Information

The Marvin H. Neel Papers were purchased in two accessions in July 2015 and January 2016. Additional letters and envelopes were acquired in 2017.

Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the Marvin H. Neel Papers was completed in January 2017. Additional materials were processed in July 2017.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Marvin H. Neel Papers, Ms2016-022, Special Collections, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Note

Marvin Harmon Neel was born in Bland County, Virginia, on June 25, 1908, to Charles Henry Neel and Annie E. (Umbarger) Neel. He was the oldest of nine children. By 1933, he married Mayme Brown (1906-2006) and they had a daughter, born around 1934. Neel served as the Ceres postmaster beginning in 1930 and also as a rural carrier until he retired from the Postal Service in the late 1950s. Neel began the acquiring presses and established the Backwoods Press in Ceres, Virginia, in 1933. The press would run consistently until the late 1950s and produced a few publications from 1958 until about 1967, when Neel retired from the printing business. He also took up writing in the early 1930s and continued that until the last few years before his death. He was associated with a number of amateur journalism, publishing, and other writing organizations. Marvin Neel died on August 7, 1978, and is buried in the Red Oak Cemetery, Ceres, Virginia.

Scope and Content

This collection includes biographical resources, ephemera, correspondence, and writings and woodcut prints by and related to Marvin H. Neel (1908-1978), created between 1933 and 1988. The collection is organized into series by type of material.

Separated Materials (Pamphlets and Single Issues)

The following single publications or single issues of serial publications were removed from the collection and cataloged for the Special Collections Rare Book Collection:

- *The Ambassador for Intermediates*. Vol. 8, No. 6, Part 4, June 25. Nashville, TN: 1939. Includes "The Pest" by Marvin H. Neel.
- *American Scribe*. Vol. VI, No. 2, Summer 1978. "This issue dedicated to Marvin H. Neel."
- *Americana Magazine*. 1946. Includes an essay by Neel.
- *Mountaineer: The Life and Times of Marvin Neel and the Backwoods Press*. Nappanee, IN: Press of the Indiana Kid, 1969.
- Page, Elizabeth. *The Tree of Liberty*. New York: The Literary Guild of America, 1939.
- *The United Alumnus*. June 1954. Includes article on Marvin H. Neel. 2 copies.

Separated Materials (Multiple Issues of Serials)

The following serial publications (with multiple issues) were removed from the collection and cataloged for the Special Collections Rare Book Collection:

- *Chimera*. Autumn 1947; Summer 1950; 1981.
- *The Scribbler/The P-K Scribbler*. Vol 1, No. 2, November 1944-Vol. 1, No. 6, July 1945; Vol. II, No. 1, October 1945-Vol. II, No. 4, July 1946; Vol. III, No. 1, October 1946-Vol. III, No. 4, February 1948.
- *The Virginian*. No. 1, Winter 1948; No. 2, Spring 1954; No. 3, Winter 1962-1963; No. 4, Spring 1963; No. 5, Autumn 1963. Nos. 1-2 contain writing or artwork by Neel.

Related Materials

As a printer and author, Neel collaborated with artist J. J. Lankes. Other materials relating to Lankes held by Virginia Tech Special Collections can be found in two additional collections.

The Welford D. Taylor Collection on Sherwood Anderson (Ms2015-020), includes correspondence between Anderson and Lankes, as well as between Anderson's widow, Eleanor Copenhaver Anderson and Lankes, and a variety of Anderson researchers and Lankes.

The Mary Sinton Leitch Correspondence with J. J. Lankes (Ms2017-001), which contains more than 25 letters, plus some envelopes and newspaper clippings that document an 18-year exchange of between the two. Letters (written between 1932 and 1950) cover topics including his work; art, literary and newspaper figures in (Southwest) Virginia; and their shared social circle.

Special Collections' Rare Book Collection also includes published items printed by Neel or which contain his writings. Searching the library's catalog for "Marvin Neel" will bring up a list of these items.

Keywords

Local/Regional History and Appalachian South

American Literature -- Virginia

Woodcut (prints)

Neel, Marvin H. (Marvin Harmon), 1908-1978

Lankes, Julius J., 1884-1960

Presgraves, Jim

The Backwoods Press (1933-1967) (Ceres, Va.)

Taylor, Welford Dunaway

Arrangement

The Marvin H. Neel Papers are organized into four series by material type.

Series I: Biographical Information contains resources about Neel, including a photocopy of an article (1952) and memorial service announcement and copy of a euglogy given by Jim Presgraves (1978). Items in this series are organized alphabetically by folder title.

Series II: Business Ephemera includes items created by Neel during the operation of The Backwood Press. This includes advertisements, letterhead (used professionally and as a sample), and examples of printing and typeset. Materials in this series are not dated, but likely date from the period the press was active (about 1933-1969). This series is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Series III: Correspondence contains seven folders of letters to, from, and about Neel. It includes letters and postcards documenting 23 years of correspondence with J. J. Lankes, with whom Neel collaborated on published works, but never meet in person (1951-1974); letters written to Jim Presgraves, his friend and a Wytheville bookseller (1972-1978); letters from F. F. Thomas, Jr. (1955); letters about Neel and his business; and a letter to W. D. Taylor, Sherwood Anderson scholar. This series is arranged in folders by correspondent.

Series IV: Printing, Writings, & Woodcuts consists primarily of copies and photocopies of essays and poems by Neel, but also contains an announcement for a book, copies of some publications printed by the Backwoods Press, and two woodcuts printed by Neel (and likely designed by J. J. Lankes). Items date from 1933 to about 1977, shortly before Neel died. This series is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

See also the "Separated Materials" note below for publications including writings by Neel which have been removed from the collection and cataloged for the Special Collections Rare Book Collection.

Description of Subordinate Components

Series I: Biographical Information

Unit Date 1952, 1978

Memorial Service Announcement/Eulogy by Jim Presgraves

Unit Date 1978

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Photocopy of _The Fossil_ article on Neel

Unit Date 1952

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Series II: Business Ephemera

Unit Date n.d.

The Backwoods Press Letterhead and Advertisement

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Printing/Typeset Samples

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Series III: Correspondence

Unit Date 1951-1988, n.d.

Correspondence about Neel

Unit Date 1974, 1988, n.d.

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Correspondence from F. F. Thomas, Jr.

Unit Date 1955

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Correspondence to J. J. Lankes

Unit Date 1952-1974

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Postcards to J. J. Lankes

Unit Date 1951-1955

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 8 (folder)

Correspondence to Jim Presgraves

Unit Date 1972, 1974

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 9 (folder)

Correspondence to Jim Presgraves

Unit Date 1975-1978

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 10 (folder)

Letter to W. D. Taylor

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 11 (folder)

Backwoods Press Envelopes (from letters to J. J. Lankes)

Unit Date 1951-1954

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 17 (folder)

Series IV: Printings, Writings, & Woodcuts

Unit Date 1933-1977, n.d.

Announcement for _The Word-Book of a Backwoodsman_

Unit Date 1962?

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 12 (folder)

Copies/Photocopies of Essays by Neel

Unit Date 1933-1977

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 13 (folder)

Photocopies of Publications Printed by Neel

Unit Date 1934-1935, 1946, 1953

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 14 (folder)

Poems

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 15 (folder)

Woodcuts

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 16 (folder)