

Register of the
Andrew N. Nelson
Papers
Collections 076 & 289

Center for Adventist Research
James White Library
Andrews University
Berrien Springs, MI 49014 -1440
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Processed by: Emmanuel Abar; updated KVA

Andrew N. Nelson Papers

Collection 076 & 289

Creator: Nelson, Andrew Nathaniel, 1893-1975

Extent: 5.5 linear feet (1 Records Carton [#289] and 1.5 lf of library shelving [#76])

Abstract: Andrew Nathaniel Nelson (1893–1975) was a Seventh-day Adventist missionary, educator, scholar of East Asian languages, and compiler of the influential *Modern Reader's Japanese-English Character Dictionary*. The collection documents his life and career through biographical materials, family correspondence, manuscripts, sermon notes, photographs, and audio recordings, with particular strength in records relating to his missionary service in Japan and the Philippines, his work with Japanese prisoners of war following World War II, and his contributions to Adventist education.

Call number: Collection 076 (Sermon Notes only) and 289

Scope and Content

Andrew Nathaniel Nelson (December 23, 1893 to May 17, 1975) was an American missionary, educator, and scholar of East Asian languages and literature. He is best known for his work in Japanese lexicography. He was born in Great Falls, Montana, to Swedish immigrant parents, and earned his B.A. from Walla Walla College. In the course of time the University of Washington awarded Nelson a Ph.D. in 1938 for his dissertation on *The Origin, History, and Present Status of the Temples of Japan*.

He first worked in the Washington Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for a few years. In 1918 he married Vera Elizabeth Shoff and that same year they began their long career of service in the Seventh-day Adventist missions of East Asia. He gained particular distinction in the fields of general education and language training. He served in Japan as the first president of Japan Missionary College and later as president of the Japan Union. In 1940 he moved temporarily to China but then had to leave during the war. During World War II he worked with the United States Army as a compiler of Japanese-English dictionaries earning the Army's Civilian Commendation Award.

Following the war he was back in Japan with General MacArthur's post-war administration. He helped to rebuild the Japan Union of Seventh-day Adventists. In 1946 he was in the Philippines where he was active in the education work to the extent of being recognized as the founder of Mountain View College in southern Philippines. He was also a chaplain at the New Bilibid Prison where he worked closely with the condemned Japanese prisoners of war. He worked to identify those who were innocent of the war crimes they were charged with. Through the rest of the 1940's and 1950's he was active in the educational work in the Philippines.

After retiring from missionary work in 1961, he was preoccupied with placing the finishing touches on his masterpiece, *The Modern Reader's Japanese-English Character Dictionary*. It is considered by many as the most authoritative Kanji dictionary for English learners of the language, and displays particular sensitivity to the

difficulties they may have with the Kangxi radical system traditionally used to classify Kanji. Nelson died unexpectedly in Hong Kong in 1975.

The collection includes biographical information for the Nelson family as well as for Andrew specifically. There is also correspondence between Andrew and his wife, Vera, as well as a good quantity of letters from his daughter, Dorothy, and his sister, Phyllis.

Of particular interest may be his materials on his work with the Japanese prisoners of war and his efforts to gain freedom for some of them. There are notes and letters along with some stories. Also there are manuscripts by Nelson describing parts of his life.

Arrangement

During processing Center for Adventist Research staff endeavored to place the mixed materials into a logical arrangement for research use. The collection is organized into three series, or categories: 1) Personal and Biographical Material, 2) Writings, and 3) Audio-Visual items such as photographs and cassette recordings..

The Personal and Biographical Material category includes three subseries: A. Family Information, B. Correspondence, and C. Sermon Notes. Please note that the bulk of documents regarding Japanese prisoner of war work Nelson did in the Philippines is represented in the Correspondence.

In 2026, 33 volumes of sermon notes were incorporated into the collection. To preserve their shelf location, they retain the Collection 076 call number.

Collection 289 has been rehoused into a single Records Carton, although the arrangement retains the original box and folder number sequence.

Provenance

The provenance of this collection is not clear. It likely arrived at the Center prior to the 1990s. The sermon notes were separated from the rest of the collection until 2026 when they were reunited with the rest of Nelson's papers.

Use

All users of this collection will complete the "Application to Use Unpublished Records," and observe the regulation specified in the "Patron's Agreement" and "Researcher's Code of Conduct." All records in this collection are open and available for research. Suggested citation for this collection:

Box ___, Fld ___, Andrew N. Nelson Papers (Collection 076 & 289), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Andrew N. Nelson Papers

Collection 076 & 289

I. Personal and Biographical Materials

A. Family Information

- Bx 1 Fld 1 Escape story from the Swedish military police
[Andrew A. Nelson]
- Bx 1 Fld 2 New York passenger list (includes Andrew Nelson's
parents)
- Bx 1 Fld 3 Wedding certificate of Andrew A. Nelson and Gustava
Johnson (Andrew N. Nelson's parents)
- Bx 1 Fld 4 Andrew Nelson's biographical information
- Bx 1 Fld 5 The Nelson's family tree
- Bx 1 Fld 6 Nelson's family number list
- Bx 1 Fld 7 Andrew Nelson's descendants between Aug. 2006
and June 2010
- Bx 1 Fld 8 Andrew Nelson's Diary, May 1913 to May 1914
- Bx 1 Fld 9 Obituaries of Andrew N. and Vera S. Nelson
- Bx 1 Fld 10 Andrew Nelson's positions, places of labor, and
honors
- Bx 1 Fld 11 Report cards and certificates from Andrew Nelson's
school days
- Bx 1 Fld 12 Andrew Nelson's educational work in the Philippines
(Mountain View College)

B. Correspondence

Andrew Nelson's family

- Bx 1 Fld 13 Private letters of Andrew and Vera Nelson (26
letters)
- Bx 1 Fld 14 Letters and clippings of Kenneth and Dorothy
Oster (Andrew Nelson's son in-law and
daughter. 100 letters, and 4 clippings)
- Bx 1 Fld 15 Letters and clippings of Phyllis and George
Bergman (sister and brother in-law of
Andrew Nelson. 23 letters, and 9
clippings)

Andrew Nelson's Philippines prison ministry documents

- Bx 2 Fld 1 Andrew Nelson's prisoner stories and appeals
- Bx 2 Fld 2 Prisoner letters, appeals, name list, and
clippings (46 letters & appeals, 4 names
list, and 3 clippings)
- Bx 2 Fld 3 Prisoner baptism
- Bx 2 Fld 4 Manalaysay and Fujisaki (arrest and
persecution of an Adventist pastor);
Aiko Fukazawa (*Providential
deliverance*)

Other Personal letters

- Bx 2 Fld 5 Thomas Geraty (narrates his acquaintance with
Andrew Nelson in Japan and China)
- Bx 2 Fld 6 Dorothy Comm (Dorothy Comm's family were
missionaries in Philippines) and George Akers
(on the week of spiritual emphasis held at
Canadian Union College, 1966. 2 letters)
- Bx 2 Fld 6 Dorothy Comm (2 letters from E. E. White; 1 letter from
Myra and Roy Anderson, 1 letter from Mitzi
Wiggle)

C. Sermon Notes

This sub-series consists of 33 volumes of sermon notes, clippings, quotations, reprints of periodical articles, and pamphlets that were collected and bound in binders by Andrew N. Nelson during the course of his professional life. He organized them alphabetically by the title of each item. The binders remain intact and are shelved as volumes at the call number location Collection 076.

Coll 076	Aa-Aw
Coll 076	Ab-Kn
Coll 076	Ba-Bu
Coll 076	Ca-Co
Coll 076	Chr-1
Coll 076	Chr-2
Coll 076	[Chr-3?]
Coll 076	Co
Coll 076	Cr-Cu
Coll 076	Da-Ez
Coll 076	Fa-Fu
Coll 076	Ga-Gu
Coll 076	Ha-Hu
Coll 076	Ho-1
Coll 076	Ho-2

Coll 076	Ho-3
Coll 076	Ia-Kn
Coll 076	La
Coll 076	La-Yo
Coll 076	Le-Ly
Coll 076	Ma-Nu
Coll 076	Ob-Ow
Coll 076	Pa-Pr
Coll 076	Pr-Qu
Coll 076	Ra-Ru
Coll 076	Sa &
Coll 076	Sa
Coll 076	Sa-Se
Coll 076	Se-Su
Coll 076	Sp
Coll 076	Ta-Ty
Coll 076	Un-Yo
Coll 076	[Misc.]

II. Writings

Manuscripts (by Nelson and others)

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Bx 3 Fld 1 | Andrew Nelson's attempt to publish Bilibid prison ministry story |
| Bx 3 Fld 2 | <i>The Last Mile</i>
Unpublished manuscript by Nelson, primarily covering the World War II years, 61 pages. |
| Bx 3 Fld 3 | <i>Unpublished Autobiographies</i>
Two draft of autobiographies by Nelson, seemingly used by Dorothy Minchin-Comm as source material for her biography.
Draft 1 is a photocopy of a handwritten document. 126 pages.
Draft 2 is typed and annotated. 86 pages.
Includes 11 photographs |
| Bx 3 Fld 4 | <i>Andrew N. Nelson, Missionary in Japan: How God Used His Knowledge of Japanese</i> , by Sadako Tokuno |
| Bx 3 Fld 5 | Klaas story by Albertina J. Tilstra (an outline), outline sketch of the rise and progress of the Third <i>Angel's Message</i> in Australasia, Avondale, T. M. G. Lister, and <i>Reminiscitory</i> . |

Poetry

- Bx 3 Fld 6 *40 Days and 40 Nights in the Orient*, by Andrew Nelson
- Bx 3 Fld 7 *Bukidnon*, by Andrew Nelson
- Bx 3 Fld 8 *1208, An Autobiography of a Missionary Family* by Andrew Nelson, and clippings
- Bx 3 Fld 9 *Campus Lilies*, a collection by Andrew Nelson and others

Articles

- Bx 4 Fld 1 Articles written by Andrew Nelson (15 articles)

Sermon

- Bx 4 Fld 2 *The Last Mile* (sermon by Andrew Nelson)

III. Audio-Visuals

Photographs

- Bx 4 Fld 3 Andrew Nelson's photos (7 photographs and 1 birth place photo)
- Bx 4 Fld 4 Andrew Nelson's Family (2 photographs)
- Bx 4 Fld 5 Photographs for Andrew Nelson's story *The Last Mile* (21 photographs)
- Bx 4 Fld 6 Kenneth and Dorothy Oster (2 photographs; 2 post cards photos)
- Bx 4 Fld 7 Mountain View College (19 photographs)
- Bx 4 Fld 8 Tilstra family, College church at Hong Kong, unidentified (1each)

Cassettes

- Bx 4 Fld 9 Cassette tapes (4 *Camp David* tapes); Two floppy disc (manuscript of a book: *Prewar Perplexities*)
- Bx 4 Fld 10 Old Testament Kings and Prophets chart
- Bx 4 Fld 11 Commencement address by Harry Moyle Tippet (June 4, 1961) at Andrews University
- Bx 4 Fld 12 Union College *Alumnus* paper (summer 1981)

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