

∞ The Ward M. Canaday Center ∞

for Special Collections

The University of Toledo

Finding Aid

➤ SCOTT NEARING PAPERS, 1943-1995◀

MSS-062

**Size:** 6 in.

**Provenance:** The papers of Scott Nearing were initially donated in 1975 by Samuel and Claire Hillman of Chicago, Illinois. Subsequent donations have been made by the Hillmans, Mrs. Helen Hillman of Toledo (sister-in-law of Samuel Hillman), and Jean Gould of New York City.

**Access:** open

**Related Collections:**

**Processing Note:** none

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**Completed by:** Barbara Shirk, October 1988.

**Reformatted by:** Arjun Sabharwal, October 2009.

## Introduction

The majority of papers in this collection were accumulated by Samuel and Claire Hillman of Chicago, Illinois. The Hillmans knew about the controversial Scott Nearing for over fifty years and met him annually when he lectured in Chicago before the Swedish Educational League.

The papers date from 1943-1995 and consist of correspondence, fliers, photographs, clippings, programs, advertisements, and reviews. Also included are newsletters, pamphlets and leaflets which were written by Scott Nearing.

Dr. Nearing was a Social Science professor and Dean of the c at the University of Toledo from 1915-1917. Because of his pacifist and socialist views during the period before U.S. entry into World War I, he was discharged from the University.

Scott Nearing and his wife, Helen, were revolutionaries who refused to exploit the environment or to be exploited as wage earners. They shunned money and modern contrivances and basically disagreed with society's get-ahead ideas. Dr. Nearing's dedication to the plight of the working people and minorities preceded public policy changes by several years, and he believed in many causes before they were fashionable. He and Helen were the contemporary practitioners of the back-to-the-land movement.

Dr. Nearing was the author of some 50 books and collaborated with others on several books.

There are no restrictions on the use of these papers.

## Biographical Sketch

1883 - Scott Nearing was born in Morris Run, Pennsylvania on August 6. He was the oldest of six children born to a produce storekeeper.

1901 - While attending Central Manual Training High School in Philadelphia, he won a scholarship to the University of Pennsylvania.

1905 - He received a Bachelor of Oratory Degree from Temple University and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Economics at the University of Pennsylvania after attending both universities at the same time.

1905-15 - He was Secretary of the Child Labor Commission, Philadelphia (1905-07); married Nellie Seeds (1908); was assistant professor at the University of Pennsylvania, Wharton School (1906-15); and was instructor at Swarthmore College (1908-13). He was eased out of Swarthmore and dismissed from the Wharton School due to his radical views and crusade against the exploitation of child labor. He began to write and lecture at this time.

1915-17 - He was appointed Social Science Professor and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Toledo. Because of his outspoken opposition to World War I, he was discharged from the University in 1917. While at Toledo, he was also lecturer at the Rand School of Social Science in New York City. His private papers from the University of Toledo were confiscated by the Justice Department and he was arrested on sedition charges for writing a pamphlet encouraging draft resistance. After a jury trial, he was fined and released. When his case was referred to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), they chose not to become involved. Publishers refused to take his articles and books and some business interests barred him from the lecture circuit.

1917-18 - After moving to New York City, he became Chairman of the Peoples Council of America; ran for Congress as a Socialist candidate (1918) against Fiorello LaGuardia and was defeated. He continued to write, lecture, and debate in the U.S. and foreign countries in an attempt to evaluate the revolutionary turmoil of the world. Among those he debated were Clarence Darrow and Bertrand Russell.

1920 - He was already separated from his wife, Nellie. They had two sons, Robert and John Scott. John Scott was adopted and later dropped the "Nearing" name. Neither son established close ties with his father.

1927-30 - After traveling through Russia in 1927, he joined the Communist Party but was ousted in 1929 when he published a book without Party sanction. He met Helen Knothe in 1928. She was 21 years younger and had been studying to be a concert violinist. She left her well-to-do family to join Nearing in his Manhattan flat in 1930.

1932 - They bought a 65-acre farm in Jamaica, Vermont where they rebuilt the soil, grew their own food, and constructed their home from fieldstone. It was heated with wood and had no electricity, telephone or radio. They also purchased an adjacent maple tree farm and used the income from sugaring to travel abroad each year. Nearing continued to lecture across the U.S.

and the world in order to observe political, social, and economic conditions and gain material for his books.

1946 - Nearing's wife, Nellie Seeds died. Due to her opposition to divorce, they had never divorced.

1947 - He married Helen Knothe.

1952 - As ski resorts began to close in on them, they moved to Harborside, Maine where they began again by building another stone home. They continued to welcome visitors who were interested in their lifestyle and in the Social Science Institute which offered lectures and discussions by Dr. Nearing.

1971 - Maine State Commission on the Arts and the Humanities presented him with a Maine State Award. The award is presented annually to those whose life and work bring special distinction to Maine.

1973 - The University of Pennsylvania bestowed the rank of Honorary Professor Emeritus in Economics on him.

1980 - Appeared in the movie, Reds, and played himself.

1983 - Died of pneumonia on August 14 (three weeks after his 100th birthday). He remained active until his death. Helen Nearing continued to live at their Harborside, Maine home where she received visitors. She also wrote, traveled, and accepted speaking engagements until her death from an auto accident on September 17, 1995.

The personal history of Dr. Nearing can be found in the following reference sources: Who's Who In America, Contemporary Authors, Current Biography, American Men and Women In Science, and New York Times Biographical Edition.

Dr. Nearing wrote over 50 books, some of which were co-authored by his wife, Helen, and others; three of his best-known books are Living the Good Life, The Maple Sugar Book, and a political autobiography entitled, The Making of a Radical.

He also wrote many pamphlets and leaflets.

Accounts of the Nearings and articles by them have appeared in national magazines, ranging from Newsweek to Organic Gardening.

Dr. Nearing has had articles written about him and his books have been reviewed in such newspapers as the New York Times, the Boston Globe, the Washington Post, and the Toledo Blade.

## Scope and Content

The papers of Scott Nearing date from 1943-1995 and consist primarily of newsletters (World Events); pamphlets and leaflets on various subjects such as fascism, U.S. economics, capitalism, imperialism and sovietism; war and peace, etc. Included with the pamphlets is one written by Dr. Nearing's son, John Scott, entitled, "There Is An Answer to the Middle East Question." There are also fliers announcing Nearing's lectures; programs for his lectures before the Swedish Educational League; ads and reviews of his books; newspaper and magazine clippings, including his obituary; his miscellaneous writings; a few photos; and mostly outgoing correspondence from Helen and Scott Nearing to the Hillmans and Jean Gould. There is also a set of ten recordings which consists of talks by Dr. Nearing about the United Nations.

A bibliography compiled by Victor C. Young, Carlson Library, is attached to this finding aid and lists books written by Dr. Nearing and others; books about him; pamphlets, microforms and recordings; book reviews; journal and newspaper articles; published and unpublished debates, symposia and speeches; and manuscript collections.

Also attached is an inventory of the Scott and Helen Nearing Collection at Boston University Libraries.

## Folder List

### Box Folder

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 1   | Correspondence                             |
| 1   | Incoming, 1971                             |
| 2   | Outgoing,                                  |
|     | Helen and Scott, 1943-1975                 |
| 3   | Miscellaneous, 1969                        |
|     | Newsletter (World Events)                  |
| 4   | 1944-1946                                  |
| 5   | 1949-1952                                  |
|     | Pamphlets                                  |
| 6   | (1 of 3)                                   |
| 7   | (2 of 3)                                   |
| 8   | (3 of 3) Son, John Scott                   |
| 9   | Leaflets                                   |
|     | Book                                       |
| 10  | <u>War--Patriotism--Peace</u>              |
|     | by Leo Tolstoi                             |
|     | (Edited and Introduction by Scott Nearing) |
| 11  | Writings                                   |
|     | Miscellaneous, 1950-1974                   |
| 12  | Fliers                                     |
| 13* | Photographs                                |
| 14* | Clippings, 1947-1995                       |
| 15  | Programs, 1945-1954                        |
|     | (Swedish Educational League)               |
| 16  | Advertisements and Reviews                 |
| 17* | Miscellaneous, 1945-1983                   |
| 2   | Ten phonograph recordings of Scott         |
|     | Nearing's talk about the United            |
|     | Nations), December 15, 1948                |

(Both boxes are located in R-4)

\*=oversize cabinet