

∞ 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

Collection Summary: Nearing's papers consist primarily of newsletters (especially world events); pamphlets and leaflets on various subjects, including fascism; U.S. economics; capitalism; imperialism and Sovietism; war; and peace. Nearing was a Social Science professor and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Toledo from 1915 to 1917, but was discharged because of his pacifist and socialist views. The University of Toledo Archives also has holdings documenting Dr. Nearing's tenure at UT.

Subjects: [Education and Schools](#), [Politics and Government](#)

Related Collections: UR 83/109: Board of Directors, Trustees Meeting Minutes, University Archives

Processing Note: none

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Completed by: Barbara Shirk, October 1988; revised by Tamara Jones, August 2014

**Scott Nearing
Papers, 1943-1995**

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 College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Toledo (then Toledo University) 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.

Scott Nearing
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Biographical Sketch

Scott Nearing was born in Morris Run, Pennsylvania on August 6, 1883, the oldest of six children born to a produce storekeeper. He attended Central Manual Training High School in Philadelphia, and in 1901, he won a scholarship to the University of Pennsylvania. He received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Economics from the University of Pennsylvania, as well as a Bachelor of Oratory Degree from Temple University. He attended both schools at the same time and received both degrees in 1905.

The next ten years were a busy time for Nearing. After graduating from college, he served as Secretary of the Child Labor Commission in Philadelphia (1905-07), assistant professor at the Wharton School of the University Pennsylvania (1906-15), and 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 writing and lecturing at this time. In 1908, he also married Nellie Seeds.

In 1915, after leaving Wharton, Nearing came to Toledo University. He was appointed Social Science Professor and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and was also lecturer at the Rand School of Social Science in New York City. However, Nearing's tenure at TU did not last long. In 1917, he was discharged from the University due to his outspoken opposition to World War I. His private papers from Toledo University 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 accept his articles and books, and some business interests barred him from the lecture circuit.

In 1917, Nearing moved to New York, where he became Chairman of the Peoples Council of America for Democracy and Peace. The following year, he ran for Congress as a Socialist candidate 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. Shortly after his congressional run, he separated from his wife, Nellie. The couple had two sons, Robert and John Scott. Robert was adopted, and John Scott later dropped the "Nearing" name. Neither son established close ties with his father.

After traveling through Russia in 1927, Nearing joined the Communist Party, but was ousted in 1929 when he published a book without Party sanction. In 1928, he met Helen Knothe. 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. Two years later, 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. He married Helen Knothe in 1947, the year after his wife Nellie died. Scott and Nellie had been separated since 1920 due to Nellie's opposition to divorce.

Scott Nearing Papers, 1943-1995

By the early 1950s, ski resorts began to close in on the Nearings' property, so they moved to Harborside, Maine, where they started over 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. In 1971, the 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. In 1973, The University of Pennsylvania bestowed the rank of Honorary Professor Emeritus in Economics on Nearing. In 1980, he appeared in the movie *Reds*, playing as himself.

Scott Nearing died of pneumonia on August 14, nearly 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 in an auto accident on September 17, 1995.

Over the course of his life, 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*.

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*.

**Scott Nearing
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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.

**Scott Nearing
Papers, 1943-1995**

Folder List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
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

*=oversize cabinet