

# Roscoe Nelson Collection

## Finding Aid

Windsor Historical Society  
96 Palisado Avenue, Windsor, CT 06095

**Creator:** Roscoe Nelson (1861-1961)

**Dates:** 1890-1961

**Extent:** 5 linear feet

**Accession #:** 1932.7, 1988.37, 1990.15, 1992.26, 1996.92, 1998.6

### Biographical Note

Roscoe Nelson was born on October 22, 1861, in Canaan, Maine. He graduated from Bates College in 1887 and Yale Divinity School in 1892. He was ordained in the First Church in Windsor, CT, on June 2, 1892, and served as its minister until July 1, 1932, when he retired and became pastor emeritus. First Church in Windsor was his only parish. During his pastorate, he witnessed many changes in the town of Windsor as it grew from a rural farming village to a suburban community. The church tripled its membership, celebrated its Tercentenary in 1930, and in 1956 named its new fellowship hall in his honor.

Rev. Nelson married Harriet Louise Cooke on June 30, 1892, and they had three sons. Frederic C. Nelson (1893-1981), a journalist and senior editor at the *Saturday Evening Post*, R. Winthrop Nelson (1895-1966), an investment broker, and Theodore Phillips Nelson (1898-1910). They suffered a deep personal loss when their 12 year old son Theodore drowned in the nearby Farmington River.

In addition to his pastoral duties, Rev. Nelson was active in civic and community affairs. He was a member of the school board, president of the Windsor Historical Society, long-time supporter of the Windsor Library Association, and founder and chairman of the Windsor Branch of the Red Cross.

Roscoe Nelson was an avid reader and followed national and world news closely. He frequently penned letters to the editor of the *Hartford Courant* on issues that interested him, and was a strong proponent of the League of Nations and other avenues towards world peace.

Upon retiring, the Nelsons moved to West Hartford, CT, but maintained affectionate ties with First Church in Windsor. Harriet C. Nelson died on June 29, 1948 and Rev. Roscoe Nelson passed away November 9, 1961 at the age of 100. They are buried in Palisado Cemetery, Windsor, CT.

## Scope and Contents

This collection consists of a variety of personal and family memorabilia donated by the family of Rev. Roscoe Nelson. An extensive set of handwritten sermon texts delivered between 1890 and 1959 cover the entire span of his pastoral and retirement years. Personal papers and family documents include diaries, an autobiographical manuscript, photographs, diplomas, scattered issues of Harvard and Yale University alumni publications, newspaper clippings and tributes. The autobiographical manuscript describes his childhood, schooling and seminary education, and his forty-year pastorate in Windsor, CT. A small collection of photographs includes images of Nelson family members and several of the buildings owned by the First Church in Windsor.

Souvenir publications and materials collected during Nelson's tenure at the First Church in Windsor (Windsor, Conn.) include a 1911 church manual, a sampling of Sunday bulletins, and items pertaining to the 250<sup>th</sup>, 275<sup>th</sup>, and 300<sup>th</sup> church anniversaries, and pamphlets recognizing the Tercentenary celebrations of the Town of Windsor and the State of Connecticut in the 1930's. A small account book records the taxes paid by Windsor residents in 1803 collected by Alvey Rowland.

A modest set of books from Roscoe Nelson's personal library include Bibles, religious works, several 19<sup>th</sup> century published addresses and sermons, local history publications, and volumes of poetry by Edward Rowland Sill, a Windsor native son.

## Arrangement

Series I. Sermons, 1890-1959

Series II. Personal and Family Papers

Subseries A. Papers

Subseries B. Photographs

Series III. First Church in Windsor

Subseries A. Anniversary celebrations

Subseries B. Church bulletins and membership list

Series IV. Windsor and other Connecticut materials

Subseries A. Windsor

Subseries B. Hartford

Subseries B. Wethersfield and other Connecticut

Subseries C. Newspaper clippings

Series V. Academic institutional materials

Subseries A. Loomis Institute

Subseries B. Harvard University

Subseries C. Yale University

Series VI. Books and Pamphlets

## Box and Folder Lists

### Series I. Sermons, 1890-1959

**Box 1 Sermons and Notes by Rev. Roscoe Nelson** (most include title, date, where given, scriptural references, hymns used).

1. 1890, May 25, his first sermon delivered in Hillsboro, WI 1998.6.1
2. 1892-1893 (string bound on lined paper), Windsor, CT 1992.26
3. 1894 (string bound on lined paper), Windsor, CT 1988.37
4. 1896 (string bound on writing paper), Windsor, CT 1988.37
5. 1897 (string bound on writing paper), Windsor, CT 1992.26
6. 1897 (string bound on writing paper), Windsor, CT 1988.37
7. 1898 (string bound on writing paper), Windsor, CT 1988.37
8. c1900 (on loose paper), oft-used for various occasions refers to Windsor's first ministers Wareham and Huit and to philanthropist Elihu Burritt 1988.37, 1990.15
9. 1901 (string bound in note paper), Windsor, CT? 1988.37
10. c1902 (small notebook), misc. notes for Bible studies, etc. 1992.26
11. 1903-1904 (2 bound composition books) 1992.26
12. 1903 Sunday evening talks (gray bound notebook) 1992.26
13. 1905 (2 sermons on loose paper) 1998.6.1

**Box 2 Sermons and Notes by Rev. Roscoe Nelson** (most include title, date, where given, scriptural references, hymns used)

14. 1905-1906 (2 green composition books) Windsor, CT 1990.15
15. 1906-1907 (brown notebook) 1992.26
16. c1908 (tiny brown notebook), misc. notes & sayings 1988.37
17. 1909 (brown notebook) 1992.26
18. 1914 (brown notebook) 1988.37
19. 1915 (loose lined paper) 1992.26
20. 1916 (tan notebook) 1988.37
21. 1916-1917 (brown notebook) 1988.37
22. 1919 (brown notebook) 1988.37
23. est. 1915-20 (loose pages, undated) 1988.37
24. 1918 (2 tiny notebooks), misc. notes, newspaper clipping 1992.26
25. 1916, 1919-1920 (brown notebook) 1990.15
26. 1920, Oct. (small gray paper-bound booklet) 1988.37

**Box 3 Sermons and Notes by Rev. Roscoe Nelson** (most include title, date, where given, scriptural references, hymns used)

27. 1927 (brown notebook), newspaper clipping and copy 1988.37
28. 1928 (brown notebook) 1990.15
29. 1929-1930 (brown notebook) 1988.37
30. 1931-1932 (2 brown notebooks), newspaper clipping & copy 1988.37
31. 1935-1939 (loose pages), oft-used sermons with multiple dates and places noted in margins) 1988.37
32. 1933 (loose pages), oft-used with dates, places given in margins 1992.26
33. 1938, May (loose pages), at Tarringford, [CT?] 1992.26
34. 1942, May Mother's Day (loose pages) 1992.26
35. 1943, May (loose pages) 1992.26

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|---|---------|
| 36. 1944 150 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Meeting-house (loose pages)     | 1992.26 |
| 37. 1954-1955 loose pages), oft-used; 62nd anniversary of Nelson's ordination | 1988.37 |
| 38. 1957 spring (loose pages)   | 1992.26 |
| 39. 1958 World Community Day sermon & program                                 | 1992.26 |
| 40. c1959 (loose pages)   | 1988.37 |
| 41. 1959, c April (loose pages), last sermon delivered                        | 1988.37 |

## **Series II. Personal and Family Papers**

### **Box 4 Personal and Family Papers**

1. Miscellaneous small booklets -- diary, cash account, visitations (names), and 1802 First Church donations account
2. Personal papers – including his 1892 ordination and his wedding, correspondence, certificates, newspaper clippings, and Harriet Cooke Nelson's Wellesley College 1883 graduation program
3. *The Independent*, Vol. 113, No. 3881, October 18, 1924. [A magazine of free opinion in which Rev. Nelson won first prize for his essay about his opinion of the presidential candidates (page 272)]
4. Wedding Anniversary tribute book -- dated May 1930, June 1932, June 1942; passport, trip diary, Westminster Abbey church service leaflet, tickets, receipts, son Winthrop Nelson's report cards, Town of Windsor tax receipt
5. "Farm Boy to Preacher," Roscoe Nelson's autobiography
6. Funeral tribute book from Roscoe Nelson's 1961 funeral
  - Diplomas for Roscoe Nelson, Bates College, 1887; his wife Harriet Cooke Nelson, Wellesley College, 1883; son Roscoe Winthrop Nelson, Windsor High School, 1911 & 1912; son Frederic Cooke Nelson, Windsor High School, 1911 & 1912
  - Certificate, St. Nicholas League for Theodore P. Nelson, no date
  - Old box containing a piece of wood from the "[George] Washington Elm" in Cambridge, MA.

### **Box 5 Photographs – Rev. Roscoe Nelson, Nelson family, First Church in Windsor, and others**

1. Rev. Roscoe Nelson as a young man:
  - Sepia tone on cardboard, by Charles W. Hearn, Portland, ME. undated
  - Black & white on cardboard, by Randall (1905); also copies on plain paper
  - Sepia tone on cardboard, by Pach Bros, New York; Yale Divinity School graduation in 1892
2. Rev. Roscoe Nelson's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party, Oct. 1951 & other occasions:
  - Black & white, Rev. Nelson with birthday cake; 3 copies sepia tone on paper, c1930
  - Black & white, Rev. Nelson with Rev. Rockwell Harmon Potter; c1950
  - Color, Rev. Nelson with Rev. James Morrell, Dr. James English, Dr. Hollis Husted
  - Rev. Roscoe Nelson at dedication of second tablet at Windsor Congregational Church, Dec. 1960

- Rev. Nelson with grandson Rev. Roscoe Winthrop Nelson, Jr. at dedication of Metzger Chapel of First Congregational Church, UCC, South Windsor, May 1956
3. First Church in Windsor and First Church parsonage:
- Lantern slide, First Church pulpit from center aisle, c1900
  - Black & white on paper, First Church in Windsor, front view, undated
  - Sepia tone, of Parish House, 153 Broad Street and Union Street, c1902
  - Print of construction of Parish House at 153 Broad Street, c1902
  - Sepia tone, First Church parsonage in Windsor, 143 Palisado Ave., home of Rev. Nelson (2 copies)
  - Albumen print on cardboard, Parsonage of First Church, 143 Palisado Avenue
  - Black & white of First Church parsonage; Connecticut Historical Commission survey description
  - Postcard, First Church, Windsor, c1930 (3copies)
  - Black & white on cardboard, First Church in Windsor, c1890
  - Black & white on heavy board, front of First Church, c1890
  - Postcard, First Church with message and postmark, April 1942
  - Black & white on paper, First Church with trees on north side; photo by William S. Leek, Windsor, CT, c1890
  - Black & white, First Church in winter, c1940
  - Black & white, First Church with circle of flags in foreground; north side tree removed, c1950
  - Black & white, interior of First Church from center aisle
4. Group photos at Roger Ludlow School:
- Sepia tone, group photos of school children, one sitting and one standing, c.1890; Rev. Nelson's son Fredric is one of the children in the two photos. (incorrectly labeled as Bell School)
  - Sepia tone, group of teachers at Worcester High School, Worcester, MA, 1890-1892. photo has inset of school in left upper corner
  - Sepia tone, Class of 1911 Windsor High School, two of Rev. Nelson's sons in photo
5. Miscellaneous photographs:
- Roscoe Nelson's college reunion, Sunday School class, Anna Maria Benton, etc:
  - Black & white, group photo of Rev. Nelson with Bates College Class of 1887 photo by Dora Clark Tash, of Lewiston, ME, c.1940
  - Albumen on cardboard, group photo of adults and children, house in background, with Rev. Nelson's family, perhaps a Sunday School event, 1907
  - Sepia tone on cardboard, Miss Anna Maria Benton of Windsor in her 100<sup>th</sup> year; "the eldest own daughter of a Revolutionary Soldier in the State of Connecticut"
  - Postcard, photocopies of a quilt and a mill pond in Windsor (originals in WHS Post Card Collection)
  - Photocopy of photo, looking north from the causeway toward the covered bridge on Palisado Avenue, c.1890

### **Series III. First Church in Windsor**

#### **Box 6 First Church in Windsor materials**

1. 1880 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of First Church in Windsor with a poem written by Rev. I. N. Tarbox for the celebration; a small notepad with notes by R. A. Beardsley
2. 1894 Centennial of the Meeting-house, First Church in Windsor
3. 1905 275<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of First Church in Windsor
4. 1930 Tercentenary of First Church in Windsor
5. 1930 Tercentenary Pageant program
6. Assorted First Church in Windsor papers, booklets, etc.
7. First Church in Windsor Sunday bulletins from June 1927-Dec 1933; 1949 and 1958 scattered dates
8. First Church in Windsor membership list of 1911

### **Series IV. Windsor and other Connecticut materials**

#### **Box 7 Hartford, CT churches and Windsor, CT miscellaneous items**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Connecticut D.A.R. <i>The Ellsworth Homestead, Past and Present</i> . [S. I.]: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Co., 1907 [also on library shelf at 974.62 DAR]	1
Oliver Ellsworth Homestead, articles about its 1903 opening to the public, including a program from the opening celebration	1
<i>Town of Windsor Annual Report</i> , 1929	2
<i>Windsor Historical Society Annual Report</i> , 1933	2
<i>The Dial</i> , June 1896, vol. 1 no. 1; a Windsor, CT periodical	2
Tercentenary of Windsor program, 1933 (2 copies)	3
Hayden, Jabez H. <i>Centennial Historical Address</i> . Hartford, Conn: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1876 [a speech given in Windsor in 1876]	3
Hayden, Jabez H. <i>Historical Sketches</i> . Windsor Locks, Conn.: The Windsor Locks Journal, 1900. [also on library shelves at 974.62 Hayden]	3
Memorial service for Rev. Clark Smith Beardslee, professor of Biblical Studies at Hartford Theological Seminary, May 1914, at which Rev. Nelson delivered an address	4
Bushnell, Horace. <i>An Historical Estimate of the State</i> . Hartford: Boswell and Faxon, 1851	5
Parker, Edwin Pond. <i>The Hartford Central Association and the Bushnell Controversy</i> . Hartford, Conn: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1896	5
Walker, Williston. <i>The First Ecclesiastical Society in Hartford 1670-1903</i> . Hartford : Case, Lockwood & Brainard, 1903. [address at the time of transfer of property to First Church of Hartford] [2 copies, one on library shelves at 974.63 Hartford First Walker]	5
Walker, George Leon. <i>Things of Present Significance: a Sermon preached at the sixty-second anniversary of the American Home Missionary Society at Saratoga Springs, N. Y., June 5, 1888</i> . New York: American Home Missionary Society, 1888.	5

First Church of Christ. <i>Yearbook of the First Church of Christ in Hartford: Reports of the Church for the year 1909</i> . [Hartford, Conn.: The Church, 1910 [on library shelves at 974.63 Hartford First 1910]	5
Potter, Rockwell H. <i>Hartford's First Church</i> . Hartford, Conn.: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1932. [Potter was the 16 <sup>th</sup> minister of the church to present, includes a chronology from 1879-1931; brief bios of the ministers from Rev. Hooker to Rev. Potter] [on library shelves at 974.63 Hartford First Potter]	5
1948-49 roster of the Connecticut Valley Theological Club	6
Holsworth, Doris Campbell. <i>The Leaves of the Tree: a pageant celebration of the Tercentenary of the settlement of Wethersfield, Conn. in June 1934</i> . [S.l.: s.n.], 1930 [also on library shelf at 974.63 Wethersfield Hols pt. 1]	7
<i>Hartford Courant</i> and <i>Hartford Daily Times</i> newspaper clippings about the Hurricane of 1938; photos of the 1936 flood from the <i>Hartford Courant</i>	8

### Box 8 Academic institutional materials (1988.37)

Title	Folder
<i>The Loomis Institute</i> , [pamphlet], 1986, a timeline of their history and merge with Chaffee School, a statement of donations to the Institute	1
Fowles, Lloyd. W. <i>The Harvest of Our Lives: The History of the First Half-Century of the Loomis Institute</i> . Hartford, Conn: Bond Press, Loomis Bulletin, Vol. 32 No. 3, March 1964 [also on library shelves at 373 Fowles]	1
<i>Harvard Alumni Bulletin</i> , Jan 1915; Oct 1916 (3 copies); Nov 1916 (2 copies); Dec 1916. Published by the Harvard Alumni Assoc., Boston, Mass.	2
"Winners of Academic Distinctions in Harvard College" [booklet] in which Roscoe Winthrop Nelson's name is listed in the Class of 1916 (4 copies)	3
Certificate of scholarship Roscoe Winthrop Nelson 1915-1916	3
<i>The Harvard Crimson</i> [newspaper] Dec 11, 1914; a section from the <i>Boston Herald</i> (date unknown) concerning a football game.	4
Yale vs Harvard football score card Nov. 20, 1915 with photos, history of rivalry games	5
Harvard Sophomore Blue Book Class of 1916, March 1914 dinner and play	5
<i>The Harvard Illustrated Magazine: A Monthly Journal of Harvard Men and Affairs</i> . Dec 1913 & June 1914 issues	5
<i>Alumnos Conlegi Harvardiani Ornatissimos</i> , 1916 commencement program in Latin	5
<i>The Harvard Advocate</i> : Cambridge, Mass., Oct 1915 and June 1915 issues, a magazine published by the students	5
Tickets to the 1952 Harvard commencement (2)	6
Harvard University commencement June 1952 Order of Exercises (3)	6
Harvard Alumni Association's Order of Exercises, June 1952 (3)	6
<i>Harvard Alumni Bulletin</i> – May 1952, published by the Alumni Association, Cambridge, Mass.	6

## **Series VI. Books and Pamphlets**

### **Box 9 Books and pamphlets (1996.92)**

- Alexander, Charles M. *Alexander's Gospel Songs*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1908
- Wells, Amos R. *Daily Digest of Sunday School Lessons for 1929*. Boston, Mass: W. A. Wilde Co., 1928
- *Nehemiah*. [S. l.: s.n., s.d] [may be only a portion of the original text] [holographic notation on back page: Abraham Pierson his Book, bought at Middletown, March 20<sup>th</sup> 1777]
- Douglas, Stephen A. *Measures of Adjustment*. Washington, D.C.: Gideon & Co., 1851. [speech given in Chicago in 1850]
- *The Outlook*, Aug. 1916, a weekly magazine about political affairs.
- Gordon, Elizabeth Putnam. *Women Torch-Bearers*. Evanston, IL: National WCTU Publishing House, 1924. (inscribed to Harriett Nelson by the author) [on library shelves at 178.1 Gordon]
- Geikie, Cunningham. *The Life and Words of Christ*. New York: Lovel, Coryell & Co., [sad.]
- Whiston, William. *The Genuine Works of Flavius Josephus. Volumes I & II*. Philadelphia, Pa: J. Grigg, 1829.
- Religious text, missing title page. (about 1850s)

### **Box 10 Books (1996.92)**

- *The Hebrew Bible*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1889.
- *The Bible*. [The Geneva or "Breeches Bible"] London, England: s.n., 1599
- [some of the first pages are missing]
- Background information on the "Breeches" Bible; genealogical information about the Tuttle family who apparently owned this Bible before it was acquired by Rev. Nelson, copied from the divider pages in the Bible

### **Box 11 Books (1998.6 and 1932.7)**

- *The Holy Bible. Old and New Testaments translated out of original tongues*. New York: American Bible Society, 1855
- Tracy, Joseph. *The Great Awakening: A History of the Revival of Religion*. Boston, Mass: Charles Tappen, 1845
- Westcott, Brooke F. and Hort, Fenton J. A. *The New Testament in the Original Greek*. Cambridge and London: Macmillan and Co., 1889
- Sill, Edward Rowland. *Poems*. Boston, Mass.: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., [s.d.] [also on library shelves at 811 Sill]
- Sill, Edward Rowland. *Hermione and other Poems*. Boston, Mass: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., [s.d.] [also on library shelves at 811 Sill]
- G. Fox & Co. *Highways & Byways of Connecticut*. Hartford, Conn: G. Fox & Co, 1947 [also on library shelves at 974.6 Fox]
- Belknap, Jeremy. *Memoirs of the Lives, Characters and Writings of those two Eminently Pious and Useful Ministers of Jesus Christ, Dr. Isaac Watts and Dr. Philip Doddridge*.



Boston: Peter Edes for David West, 1793. (1932.7.3) [on library shelves at RB 920 Belknap]

- Porter, Samuel. *A Sermon Preached at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. Joseph Perry to the pastoral care of a church in Windsor.* Boston: John Draper, 1755. (1937.7.2) [on library shelves at RB 252 Porter]
- Seward, William. *Due Consideration of, and preparation for our latter end, or death, recommended and urged: in two sermons, preached at North Killingworth June 2d 1771.* New Haven, [Conn.]: Thomas and Samuel Green, 1772 (1937.7.1) [on library shelves at RB 252 Seward]
- Rowland, Henry A. *A discourse delivered November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1800: a day observed as an anniversary thanksgiving.* Hartford, Conn.: Hudson and Goodwin, 1801. [1988.37.2]

## Related Materials

Subject files:

Churches – First Church in Windsor  
Churches -- First Church in Windsor – Tercentenary  
Houses – Palisado Avenue, 143

Family files:

Nelson, Frederic  
Nelson, Roscoe

Harriet Cooke Nelson Collection (2006.40)

Signature quilt given to Rev. Roscoe Nelson (1991.65)

## Subject Terms

Beardslee, Clark S. (Clark Smith), 1850-1914  
Connecticut River Valley Theological Club  
First Church in Windsor (Windsor, Conn.)  
First Church of Christ (Hartford, Conn.)  
Hayden Hall (Windsor, Conn.)  
Nelson, Frederic C., 1893-1981  
Nelson, Harriet Cooke, 1860-1948  
Nelson, R. Winthrop, 1895-1966  
Nelson, R. Winthrop, Jr.  
Nelson, Roscoe, 1861-1961  
Oliver Ellsworth Homestead (Windsor, Conn.)  
Pierson, Abraham  
Potter, Rockwell Harmon, 1874-1967  
Rowland, Alvey  
Rowland, Henry A. (Henry Augustus), 1764-1835  
Sill, Edward Rowland, 1841-1887  
Walker, George Leon  
Windsor (Conn.) – Church history  
Windsor High School (Windsor, Conn.)

## **Custodial history**

Materials for the Roscoe Nelson Collection were first donated to the Windsor Historical Society in 1988. At that time Carol Ann Stephenson processed the collection and prepared a finding aid. Subsequent donations by the family have been added to the collection. In 2007 and 2008, Sandra McGraw and Barbara Goodwin reorganized the collection, integrated the additional complimentary materials, and prepared the revised finding aid. Some of the books were placed on the Windsor Historical Society library shelves and added to the catalog.