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Ruth Ann Alexander Papers

Finding Aid

South Dakota State University Archives and Special Collections
Briggs Library (SBL) Room 241 Box 2114
1300 North Campus Drive
Brookings, SD 57007
Phone: 605-688-5094
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Collection Summary

Identifier

UA 53.22

Title

Ruth Ann Alexander Papers

Creator

Ruth Ann Alexander

Dates

1947-2006

Extent

2.0 linear feet -- 2 records center boxes, photographs

Language

English

Repository

South Dakota State University Archives and Special Collections, Hilton
M. Briggs Library, Brookings, South Dakota.

Access note

This collection is open to researchers without restrictions. The materials in the Archives do not circulate and may be used in-house only.

Preferred Citation

Name of item. Ruth Ann Alexander Papers. UA 53.22. South Dakota State University Archives and Special Collections, Hilton M. Briggs Library, Brookings, South Dakota.

Abstract

Ruth Ann Alexander was professor and head of the English Department. This collection is composed of files related to her writing and speeches, records related to her term on the Brookings School Board, Chautauqua, and with her term as head of the English Department. Also included is material related to various other activities in which Alexander was involved.

Biographical Note

Ruth Ann Alexander February, 13 1924 – February 1, 2010

Born in Lansing, MI on February 13, 1924 to Harry and Anne (Green) Musselman, Ms. Alexander graduated from East Lansing High School and Michigan State University with a BA in English in 1945. She completed her masters in American studies at the University of Minnesota and her PhD in American intellectual history at Michigan State. She married William Alexander in 1955 and had three children.

Ms. Alexander taught English at South Dakota State University for 34 years, becoming full professor and the first woman to head the English Department (1981-1989). She developed the university's first courses focusing on women writers and African American and Native American literature. She chaired the committee that created the Women's Studies major. Ms. Alexander received numerous grants and fellowships, including a Bunting Fellowship at Harvard in 1987. She received SDSU's Outstanding Educator Award" in 1971, 1972, and 1974. Upon retirement in 1989, she was named Professor Emeritus and continued to research South Dakota women writers and women in the Episcopal Church. From 1994 to 2002 she wrote a column about women in the Episcopal Church called "All Sorts and Conditions of Women" for South Dakota Church News. In 2003, she published the collected columns in *Patches in a History Quilt: Episcopal Women in the Diocese of South Dakota, 1868-2000*. She wrote numerous scholarly articles on such South Dakota writers as Elaine Goodale Eastman and Kate Boyles Bingham. She was a touring member of the Great Plains Chautauqua series, portraying Elizabeth Cady Stanton from 1989-91 and acting as series moderator from 1998-2001.

A life-long advocate of equal opportunities for women and girls, Ms. Alexander was the first woman on the Brookings School Board (1970-1975) and worked for equal funding for activities for girls and boys and higher academic standards. In 1972 Governor Kneip appointed her to the first statewide Commission on the Status of Women where she served until 1979. She also served on the Board of Directors for the South Dakota Historical Association from 1988-2000; the Episcopal Church History Association from 1992-1997 and for the Episcopal Women's Church History Project from 1991-1997. She helped found the Brookings Food Pantry and was chair of the Emergency Services Commission from 1983-1999.

Ruth Ann Alexander died of lymphoma on February 1 in Brookings, South Dakota. She was preceded in death by her husband, William Alexander in 1979; her sister, Jane (Musselman) Addams of Houston, Texas in 2008; and her late life sweetheart, Wes Kelley of Brookings in October 2009. She is survived by her three children: Jane Alexander (Mark Johnson) of New Orleans; Andrew Alexander (Linda Kruckenberg) of Wayne, NE; and Sarah Alexander of Sioux Falls; and by her siblings: George Musselman of Grand Haven, MI; Sarah (Musselman) Phelps of Madison, WI; and Mary (Musselman) Fischer of Hastings, MN

Arrangement

This collection is arranged into seven series:

- Series 1. Personal material
- Series 2. Brookings School Board activities
- Series 3. Chautauqua activities
- Series 4. English Department Head at SDSU and teaching
- Series 5. Other activities
- Series 6. Writings and speeches
- Series 7. South Dakota Commission on the Status of Women

Contents Note

This collection is composed of material related to activities of Dr. Alexander. The bulk of the material is composed of files related to her writing and speeches. Folders consist of correspondence, research, agreements with publishers, grant material, and manuscripts. Researchers will also find

records related to her term on the Brookings School Board including material related to her campaign, papers related to her involvement in Chautauqua, and records dealing with her term as head of the English Department at South Dakota State University, with a small amount of material related to courses she taught. Also included is material related to various other activities conducted by Alexander, such as her involvement with the Episcopal Church, and research dealing with women, women's rights, pioneer women, feminism and sexism. Also included are files related to Alexander's term serving on the South Dakota Commission on the Status of Women.

Key Words

Alexander, Ruth Ann, 1924-2010

Breneman, Muriel

Brookings (S.D.). School Board

Cady Stanton, Elizabeth

Chautauqua

Episcopal Church

Feminism

Le Seuer, Meridel

Pioneer women

Sexism

South Dakota -- History

South Dakota Commission on the Status of Women

South Dakota State University -- Department of English

Wilder, Laura Ingalls

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open to researchers without restrictions. The materials in the Archives do not circulate and may be used in-house only.

Researchers conducting extensive research are asked to make an advance appointment to access archival material. Please call or e-mail prior to visiting the collection and indicate as much detail as possible about a particular topic and intended use.

South Dakota State University supports access to the materials, published and unpublished, in its collections. Nonetheless, access to some items may be restricted as a result of their fragile condition or by contractual agreements with donors.

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Arranged and Described by

Crystal J. Gamradt, Archivist, 2010 July 7, additions made 2016 April 26.

Container List

Series	Box	Folder	Description	Date(s)
1. Personal material	1	1	Clippings about Alexander	1954-1996, 2001
1. Personal material	1	2	Honors	1967-1993
2. Brookings School Board activities	1	3	Brookings School Board : Correspondence	1970-1975, 1992-1993
2. Brookings School Board activities	1	4	Brookings School Board : Publicity on Alexander's campaign	1968-1970
3. Chautauqua activities	1	5	Chautauqua	1998-2001
3. Chautauqua activities	1	6	Chautauqua application	1998
3. Chautauqua activities	1	9	Chautauqua in Portsmouth, New Hampshire (Elizabeth Cady Stanton)	1997 July 28-304
3. Chautauqua activities	1	7	Chautauqua lecture to Spearfish, SD Middle School (includes letters from school children)	1994-1995

Series	Box	Folder	Description	Date(s)
3. Chautauqua activities	1	8	Chautauqua memorabilia	1986-2001
3. Chautauqua activities	1	10	Elizabeth Cady Stanton forum	1990
4. English Department Head at SDSU and teaching	1	11	College of Arts and Science, SDSU: Dean Search Committee	1985
4. English Department Head at SDSU and teaching	1	12	ENGL 794: Seminar in American Literature (course material)	1987
4. English Department Head at SDSU and teaching	1	14	English Department, SDSU : correspondence	1984-1989
4. English Department Head at SDSU and teaching	1	13	English Department, SDSU application for chairman	1975-1981
4. English Department Head at SDSU and teaching	1	15	Humanities 253: Black and Red in American Society (course material)	1970, 1976
4. English Department Head at SDSU and teaching	1	16	Meridel Le Seuer talk at SDSU	1978
4. English Department Head at SDSU and teaching	1	17	Name plate	undated
5. Other activities	1	18	Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, MA application	1986-1990
5. Other activities	1	19	Feminine history research	undated
5. Other activities	1	20	Laura Ingalls Wilder monologue	1986, 1995
5. Other activities	1	21	Laura Ingalls Wilder/William Anderson project	1983-1985
5. Other activities	1	22	Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute of Radcliffe College Fellowship	1987-1993
5. Other activities	1	23	Plainswoman activities (journal)	1984-1989
5. Other activities	1	24	Proving Up! – The South Dakota Experience exhibit (member of Humanist Planning Committee at the Cultural Heritage Museum in Pierre, SD)	1990-1992
5. Other activities	1	25	Snapshots of Women in South Dakota Church History at Episcopal Convention with focus on Emily West	2001 September 28-30
5. Other activities	1	26	South Dakota History Conference	2003 April 25-26

Series	Box	Folder	Description	Date(s)
5. Other activities	1	27	South Dakota Humanities Council : Speakers Bureau	1999
6. Writings and speeches	1	28	Book reviews	1982-1987
6. Writings and speeches	1	29	Book reviews	1990-2006
6. Writings and speeches	1	30	Brookings High School National Honor Society Induction Ceremony speech	1984
6. Writings and speeches	1	32	Encyclopedia of the Great Plains contribution	1999
6. Writings and speeches	1	33	Feminism / Sexism in Education (talks and articles)	1974-1975
6. Writings and speeches	1	34	Fictionalizing South Dakota History: Kate Boyles Bingham, a South Dakota Humanities Council grant	1991-1992
6. Writings and speeches	1	31	Graduation speech	1983
6. Writings and speeches	1	35	Historiography papers	undated
6. Writings and speeches	1	36	Interview with Muriel Breneman	1985-1997
6. Writings and speeches	1	37	Keynote speech at Sioux Falls College "Breaking Barriers" in celebration of Women's History Month	1991
6. Writings and speeches	1	38	Letters to editor...	1964-2002
6. Writings and speeches	1	39	Parenting in a Changing Society (talk)	1978
6. Writings and speeches	1	40	Phi Kappa Phi Lecture (speech)	1982
6. Writings and speeches	1	42	Publications and articles	1947-1997
6. Writings and speeches	1	43	South Dakota Women Stake a Claim (manuscript)	1990
6. Writings and speeches	1	44	South Dakota Women Writers and the Blooming of the Prairie Heroine, 1922-1939 (manuscript, agreement, correspondence)	1984
6. Writings and speeches	2	1	South Dakota Women Writers and the Emergence of the Prairie Heroine	1983
6. Writings and speeches	2	2	Speeches and papers on South Dakota women and writers	1976-1984

Series	Box	Folder	Description	Date(s)
6. Writings and speeches	1	41	The Pioneer Heroine as Idea	1985-1986
6. Writings and speeches	2	3	Three Missionary Teachers to the Indians, 1856-1894 – a South Dakota Humanities Council grant	1996-1997
6. Writings and speeches	2	4	Toward Our Third Century (writing)	1976
6. Writings and speeches	2	5	Women in Midwestern Literature (writings and revisions)	undated
6. Writings and speeches	2	6	Women's issues (talks)	2004
6. Writings and speeches	2	7	Women's rights papers	1993-1999
7. South Dakota Commission on the Status of Women	2	8	Athletic dispute : Brookings (SD) School Board on women's activities	1974-1975
7. South Dakota Commission on the Status of Women	2	9	Athletic dispute : Women's activities in Brookings (SD) Public Schools	1971-1974
7. South Dakota Commission on the Status of Women	2	10	Commission records (policy statements, history, minutes, members, task force, budget)	1974-1979
7. South Dakota Commission on the Status of Women	2	11	Did You Know column (Information about opportunities and problems of South Dakota women)	1975-1979
7. South Dakota Commission on the Status of Women	2	12	Equal Rights Amendment in 1979 / Displaces Homemakers Bill (Senate Bill 82)	1974-1979
7. South Dakota Commission on the Status of Women	2	13	International Women's Year Conference, Houston, Texas: Perspectives on - beginning, end, or way station?	1977
7. South Dakota Commission on the Status of Women	2	14	National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year	1976-1977
7. South Dakota Commission on the Status of Women	2	15	Room at the Top Conference : Upward Mobility Task Force	1974
7. South Dakota Commission on the Status of Women	2	16	South Dakota International Women's Year Conference	1975-1978
7. South Dakota Commission on the Status of Women	2	17	South Dakota Women's Political Caucus	1977