

Guide to the Walter H. Brovald Papers, 1938-1990

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Summary Information

Title: Walter H. Brovald Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1938-1990

Creator: Brovald, Walter H., 1928-

Call Number: Eau Claire Mss BG; Eau Claire Micro 26; Micro 1136

Quantity: 9.6 c.f. (6 archives boxes and 1 flat box), 3 reels of microfilm (35mm)

Repository: Housed at the Area Research Center, William D. McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire; owned by the Wisconsin Historical Society, Library-Archives Division

Archival Locations: UW-Eau Claire McIntyre Library / Eau Claire Area Research Ctr.

Abstract: Papers of a journalism educator and editor/publisher (1954-1967) of the *Cadott Sentinel*, Cadott, Wisconsin, an award-winning weekly newspaper, including personal correspondence, photographs, and business and professional material. The business and professional papers consist of financial records and correspondence concerning his early career as a copywriter for the Arthur Towell advertising agency, his purchase of the *Sentinel*, his leadership in the Wisconsin Press Association, and his relationship with many journalists and Wisconsin politicians such as Lester Johnson, Gaylord Nelson, Alvin O'Konski, Vernon Thomson, and Alexander Wiley. Personal correspondence, which is predominantly outgoing, details his education at the University of Wisconsin during the 1940s and at the University of Minnesota during the 1960s, his career as a Methodist lay minister, and his work as publicist for the Wisconsin-Nicaragua Partners of the Americas. The latter files include photographs and newspaper columns concerning a 1965 trip to Nicaragua by the Partners. Also included are biographical clippings, diaries, research material and notes about Cadott, files on coursework at the University of Wisconsin, and a few examples of his writings.

Language: English

Biography/History

Journalist Walter H. Brovald was born in Necedah, Wisconsin on May 5, 1928. He grew up in Eau Claire and graduated from the local high school in 1945 and the University of Wisconsin in 1949.

Although Brovald's undergraduate major was English, he was a lifelong journalism and printing enthusiast, and he began printing a newspaper at the age of ten. During high school he ran his own commercial print shop and was sports editor for his high school paper and a sports reporter for

various local newspapers. While a student at the University he worked for the *Daily Cardinal* and as a copywriter for the Arthur Towell advertising agency. From 1949 to 1952 Brovald was editor, then managing editor of the *Stanley Republican*, Stanley, Wisconsin. At this time, he began writing a column about small town life, "Behind the Eight Ball," which he continued after he left the *Republican*. In 1952-1953 he tried his hand in radio as the assistant news editor for WEAU in Eau Claire.

In 1954 Brovald fulfilled a lifelong dream of operating his own weekly newspaper when he bought the *Cadott Sentinel* from publisher A. T. Nabbefeld. As publisher and editor of the Sentinel Printing and Publishing Co., Brovald put out the paper and operated a job printing business on the side. For this work he received 56 state and national awards for journalistic excellence. During the period 1960-1961 he served as president of the Wisconsin Press Association.

During his career in Cadott, Brovald was very active in the community's social, political, and religious life. He served as president of the local Lion's Club and was a member of the Chamber of Commerce and the Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire area committee. From 1958 to 1961 he also served as a lay pastor to several Methodist churches in the area. Brovald was a founding member of the Wisconsin/Nicaragua Partners of the Americas, and in 1965 he traveled to Nicaragua as the Partner's public relations officer.

In 1966 Brovald left Cadott to study for an advanced degree in mass communications at the University of Minnesota, while his wife Lillian T. Brovald stayed behind to run the paper. After the paper was sold in 1967, Brovald settled in St. Paul and taught at the University.

Scope and Content Note

The papers primarily document the Wisconsin portion of Brovald's career in journalism. This was a period in which he achieved considerable professional prominence as the editor/publisher of a weekly newspaper, and although the documentation in this small collection is not complete, it does afford the researcher a rare archival glimpse of that type of journalistic activity. While the documentation concerning the operational and financial status of the paper is disappointing, the collection does paint a vivid picture of how the life of a small-town newspaperman differed from his metropolitan counterpart. In addition, there is extensive material about Brovald's personal life while a student at the University of Wisconsin and later in graduate school at the University of Minnesota, his work as a Methodist lay minister, and his involvement with the Wisconsin-Nicaragua Partners of the Americas. The latter files are of particular interest, for they include documentary photographs and newspaper columns concerning his 1965 trip to Nicaragua.

The collection is arranged into biographical material, business and professional files, personal files, and University of Wisconsin coursework. The distinction between the personal and professional files is not always distinct, however, and one will find that the business files contain some letters to and from journalists with whom Brovald shared a personal as well as a professional relationship, while the personal files contain extensive correspondence on his volunteer work as a publicist in behalf of the Wisconsin/Nicaragua Partners. The collection consists primarily of biographical clippings, correspondence, course work, and financial records, although there are also research materials and notes primarily concerning Cadott, diaries, and a few examples of his writings. The *Cadott Sentinel* itself is available on microfilm in the Society Library.

A substantial portion of the collection consisted of carbons of Brovald's outgoing correspondence typed on highly acidic paper. On order to preserve their content, this portion of the collection has

been microfilmed. The originals were later destroyed.

The BIOGRAPHICAL MATERIAL consists of newspaper clippings about Brovald, information on miscellaneous awards, and photographs generally documenting events in his personal and professional life.

The BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL FILES are subdivided into subject files, general correspondence, and financial records. The subject files, which are arranged alphabetically, include correspondence concerning employment and the purchase of a newspaper, his work to publicize the Wisconsin Centennial in 1948 while in the employ of the Arthur Towell advertising agency and letters exchanged with Carl Zielke and other officers and members of the Wisconsin Press Association. The latter file also includes copies of the column Brovald wrote during his year as president of the WPA. Also filed here are exchanges with various friends and associates in the journalism field. The file on the White Machine Co. of Eau Claire concerns a consistent user of the Sentinel's job printing services, the only such customer documented in the papers.

The general correspondence is very diverse in character. Of special note is the political correspondence filed here. These letters range from exchanges with Joseph R. McCarthy to complaints about local postal service. Other prominent correspondents include Dorothy Johnson, Lester Johnson, Ann Landers, Gaylord Nelson, Richard Nixon, Alvin O'Konski, William Proxmire, Vernon Thomson, and Alexander Wiley. The general correspondence is arranged alphabetically by name and chronologically thereunder. Unfortunately a substantial number of the letters are identified only by first name; these have been filmed chronologically at the end of the file for each letter of the alphabet in which Brovald originally placed them.

Although the financial records originally comprised about ten cubic feet of papers, these primarily consisted of invoices and other detailed records of little research value. However, despite the extensiveness of the detailed financial records in the original collection, complete summary data about the business was not present. There is, however, a virtually complete run of state and federal income tax returns, some financial reports, a ledger and cash journal for the period 1954-1955, working papers and expense sheets, and a complete run of check stubs.

The PERSONAL FILES contain probably the most interesting documentation in the collection. These files are subdivided into family correspondence and alphabetical subject files. The family correspondence contains carbon copies of the long, detailed letters which Brovald wrote to family members and a few friends while a student at the University of Wisconsin during the late 1940s. The correspondence is intermittent during the 1950s and 1960s, but it picks up again in 1966 when Brovald left Cadott to enroll in graduate school. During 1966 and 1967 he wrote almost daily to his wife, who was running the newspaper. Unfortunately, both of these time periods are documented almost solely by outgoing letters only.

The subject files contain diaries kept as a high school student during World War II, examples of his youthful journalistic endeavors, and an extensive correspondence concerning his work as a lay minister for area Methodist churches and other religious activities. The file on the Nicaragua Partners contains correspondence concerning publicity for the group and Brovald's 1965 trip to Nicaragua. Also filed here is some research material on the Nicaraguan press compiled in 1967 by Brovald while a student at Minnesota. (Included in this file is a letter from Anastasio Somoza.)

The UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN RECORDS consist of class notes, papers, examinations, and other materials documenting the instruction received by Brovald while an undergraduate.

Administrative/Restriction Information

Acquisition Information

Presented by Walter H. Brovald, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1977. Accession Number: MCHC77-53

Processing Information

Processed by Jeffrey A. Sinnott (FGH student), 1988.

Search Terms/Subject Terms

- Johnson, Lester R. , 1901-1975
- Nelson, Gaylord, 1916-2005
- McCarthy, Joseph, 1908-1957
- O'Konski, Alvin E. (Alvin Edward), 1904-1987
- Thomson, Vernon W. (Vernon Wallace), 1905-1988
- Wiley, Alexander, 1884-1967
- Methodist Church
- Partners of the Americas (Organization). Wisconsin Nicaragua Partners
- University of Minnesota—Students
- University of Wisconsin—Madison—Students
- Wisconsin Press Association
- Advertising
- American Newspapers—Wisconsin—Cadott
- Journalists—Wisconsin
- Cadott (Wis.)
- Nicaragua
- United States—Foreign relations—Nicaragua
- Wisconsin—Politics and government

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Series: Business and Professional Files

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Box 1 Folder 4 Cadott history, 1964-1974

Box 1 Folder 5 *Cadott: History and Heritage*, 1964

Eau Claire Micro 26/Micro 1136 Reel Microfilm Copy
1 Frame 1

Eau Claire Mss BG Box 1 Folder 5 "Cadott Newspaper History, 1881-1914," 1976

Box 1 Folder 6 Cadotte family research notes, 1964

Eau Claire Micro 26/Micro 1136 Reel Colorado School of Mines, 1953
1 Frame 30

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Claire Micro 26/Micro 1136 Reel *Grant County Herald* (Margaret
1 Frame 53 Barker), 1953-1954

Reel 1 Frame 93 Harrison, R. P., 1952-1958

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Claire Micro 26/Micro 1136 Reel *Las Cruces (NM) Sun*, 1951-1952
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Box 6 Folder 1 Legal documents on land holdings, 1938-1960

Box 6 Folder 2 Press run statistics, 1962-1966

Box 6 Folder 3-4 Social Security and salary information, 1947-1967

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Box 6 Folder 9 Volume statistics, 1956-1967

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Box 1 Folder 15 Chirayatha, Joseph D. (Kerala, India), 1963-
1965

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Box 2 Folder 1 Eau Claire high school alumni, 1945-
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Box 2 Folder 3 Graduate school in journalism, 1966

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Box 2 Folder 5 High school writings, 1939-1941

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Eau Claire Micro 26/Micro 1136 Reel Correspondence, 1953-1967
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Eau Claire Mss BG Box 2 Folder 6 Material re Cadott and Lake Hallie churches, 1959-1967

Box 2 Folder 7 Miscellaneous jobs, 1953-1954, undated

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