

# **ERIK (EURICO) ALFRED NELSON PAPERS**

**1891-1975**

**AR 363**



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Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives

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# **Erik Alfred Nelson Papers**

## **AR 363**

### **Summary**

Main Entry: Erik Alfred Nelson Papers

Date Span: 1891 – 1975

Abstract: Collection consists of correspondence and personal papers of Southern Baptist missionary, Erik Alfred Nelson, that record nearly fifty years of his pioneer mission work in Brazil. The papers include material in three languages – English, Portuguese, and Swedish.

Size: 1.5 linear ft. (two boxes)

Collection #: AR 363

### **Historical, Biographical Sketch**

Erik Alfred Nelson was born December 17, 1862 in Orebro, Sweden, to Anders and Ana Nelson. When Erik was seven years old, his father, a Baptist minister, moved the family to the United States of America, settling near Chanute, Kansas, with other Swedish immigrants, to escape religious persecution in his own country.

Nelson professed faith in Christ and was baptized into the membership of a Swedish Baptist church when he was 14 years old. He worked on his father's farm and later became a cowboy, traveling extensively in the west and neglecting his religious background. As a man in his 20s, he returned to Kansas and began to diligently study the Bible.

Inspired by a letter written by W. B. Bagby, a missionary in Brazil, Nelson was determined to go to Brazil. After disappointments in trying to further his education, he sailed for Brazil in 1891, at the age of 29. He married Ida Lundberg from Kansas January 7, 1893, and she joined him in Brazil. In 1897, upon the recommendation of Baptist missionaries, William Entzminger and Solomon Ginsburg, Nelson was appointed by the Foreign Mission Board. His total service in Brazil was 48 years.

Rev. Nelson died in his home in Manaus, Brazil June 15, 1939. His funeral was in the First Baptist Church, which he founded in 1900, and his body was buried in a nearby cemetery.

### **Scope and Content Note**

The Erik Alfred Nelson Papers is a collection of correspondence and personal papers that record almost fifty years of pioneer mission work in Brazil and of the first Baptist work on the mighty Amazon River and the surrounding valley.

The papers date to 1891, when Erik Nelson, a simple farmer-cowboy with limited education, traveled from Kansas without organizational support to Brazil. They conclude with his death in

Brazil in 1939 while he was serving on a special two-year post-retirement assignment. The Erik Alfred Nelson Papers span 48 years active service: 1891 – 1997 as a self-supporting missionary, 1897 – 1938 as an appointed missionary of the Southern Baptist Convention, and 1938 – 1939 on special assignment.

The initial materials in the collection were donated by Dr. Iron Carey Hawthorne Nelson, son of Erik and Ida Lundberg Nelson, in 1975. Additions have been made by other members of the family.

The papers include material in three languages: English, Portuguese, and Swedish. Specific items include biographical sketches, diaries, sermon notes, travel notes, certificates and official documents, account and financial record books, photographs, periodicals, and unpublished manuscripts about Rev. and Mrs. Nelson's work in Brazil. Highlights include the many years Rev. Nelson lived on and ministered from a houseboat/launch, the "Buffalo."

The collection contains personal correspondence from family members in Kansas, including an older brother, A. G. Nelson, who became a state senator. Reference is made through correspondence and other documentation to William Buck Bagby, L. M. Bratcher, William Entzminger, Solomon L. Ginsburg, W. T. Taylor, and Z. C. Taylor, all early Southern Baptist missionaries to Brazil. In addition, there is considerable correspondence with Foreign Mission Board corresponding secretaries beginning with R. J. Willingham.

Official Foreign Mission Board records (AR 551-2), which parallel the Erik Alfred Nelson papers, are available but not a part of this collection. The collection also contains information about the First Baptist Church of Manaus, Brazil and the North Brazil Mission.

The collection is arranged in alphabetical order by folder title. The major series within the papers, such as correspondence and dairies, are arranged chronologically. Additions to the collection are not anticipated. The collection comprises two boxes and one and one-half cubic feet.

### **References**

- Bratcher, L. M. The Apostle of the Amazon. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951.
- Crabtree, A. R. Baptists in Brazil. Rio de Janero: The Baptist Publishing House, 1953.
- Cox, Norman Wade, (editor). Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, volume II. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958.
- Landers, John M. Erik A. Nelson: the First Baptist on the Amazon. Doctoral dissertation, Texas Christian University, 1982.
- Periera, Jose dos Reis. O Apostolo Da Amazonia. Rio de Janero: Casa Publicadora Baptista, 1945.
- White, M. G. and H. H. Muirhead. In the Land of the Southern Cross. Richmond: Educational Department, Foreign Mission Board (of the Southern Baptist Convention), 1929.

### **Arrangement**

Arranged in alphabetical order by folder title and chronologically within the series

### **Provenance**

Donated by son, Dr. Iron Carey Hawthorne Nelson, in 1975, with additions by other family members.

**Preferred Citation**

Erik Alfred Nelson Papers, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee

**Access Restrictions**

None

**Subject Terms**

Nelson, Ida Lundsburg, 1869 – 1954  
 Bagby, William Buck, 1855 – 1939  
 Bratcher, Lewis Malen, 1888 – 1953  
 Entzminger, William Edwin, 1859 – 1930  
 Ginsburg, Solomon L., 1867 – 127  
 Taylor, William Carey, 1886 –  
 Taylor, Zachary C., 1851 – 1919  
 Southern Baptist Convention. Foreign Mission Board  
 Missions – Brazil  
 Missionaries – Correspondence, reminiscences, etc.  
 Brazil – Religion

**Related Material**

Bratcher, Lewis Malen. *Apostle of the Amazon*, 1951.

Landers, John Monroe. *Eric Alfred Nelson : the first Baptist missionary on the Amazon, 1891-1939*, 1982. MF 6596.

Nelson, Erik. *Years on the Amazon, 1891-1938 notebooks & manuscript*. MF4159

Southern Baptist Convention. Foreign Mission Board. Missionary Correspondence Files. Erik Nelson Files. AR 551-2. Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives.

**Container List****Box 1**

- 1.1 Biography – Inventory
- 1.2 Boat License, 1932 – “Buffalo”
- 1.3 Buck, Pearl – “Japan Loses the War”
- 1.4 Calling Cards – Receipts – Tickets
- 1.5 Certificates – Registrations
- 1.6 Church Letters
- 1.7 Clark, Isaac Newton
- 1.8 Clippings – English
- 1.9 Clippings – Portuguese
- 1.10 Clippings – Swedish
- 1.11 “Compendio Da Doutrina Christa”
- 1.12 Correspondence – Nelson, A. G. (Brother)
- 1.13 Correspondence – Nelson, Anders (Father)

- 1.14 Correspondence – Nelson, Ana M. (Mother)
- 1.15 Correspondence – Nelson, Charles O. (Brother)
- 1.16 Correspondence – Nelson, Ida Lundberg (Wife)
- 1.17 Correspondence – John L. (Brother)
- 1.18 Correspondence – Justus H.
- 1.19 Correspondence – Mabel (Niece)
- 1.20 Correspondence, 1897 – 1900
- 1.21 Correspondence, 1903 – 1907
- 1.22 Correspondence, 1923 – 1930
- 1.23 Correspondence, 1935 – 1940
- 1.24 Correspondence – Undated
- 1.25 Correspondence (Duplicates)
- 1.26 Diary, 1894 – 1909
- 1.27 Diary, 1894 – 1909 (1)
- 1.28 Diary, 1894 – 1909 (2)
- 1.29 Diary, 1894 – 1909 (3)
- 1.30 Diary, 1894 – 1909 (4)
- 1.31 Diaries, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918
- 1.32 Diaries, 1921, 1922, 1924, 1925, 1926
- 1.33 Diaries, 1927, 1929, 1935, 1938, 1939
- 1.34 Day Book, 1910 – 1920
- 1.35 Day Book, 1926 – 1938
- 1.36 Day Book, 1926 – 1938 (Duplicate)
- 1.37 Entzminger, W. E.
- 1.38 Financial Record, 1897 – 1901
- 1.39 Forms – Baptismal – Draft
- 1.40 Hymnal, Swedish, 1896
- 1.41 Hymns, Poetry
- 1.42 Journal, 1920 – 1926
- 1.43 Journal, 1920 – 1926 (Duplicate)
- 1.44 Ledger, 1891
- 1.45 Manaus – First Baptist Church
- 1.46 Manaus – First Baptist Church – Seventy-Fifth Anniversary, 1975
- 1.47 Manuscript – “Baptist Beginnings in the Amazon Valley and North Brazil,” 1891
- 1.48 Manuscript – “Genealogy”

## **Box 2**

- 2.1 Manuscript – “Organization of the First Baptist Church in the Amazon Valley”
- 2.2 Manuscript – “Work in Brazil”
- 2.3 Manuscript – “Years on the Amazon” (1 of 4)
- 2.4 Manuscript – “Years on the Amazon” (2 of 4)
- 2.5 Manuscript – “Years on the Amazon” (3 of 4)
- 2.6 Manuscript – “Years on the Amazon” (4 of 4)
- 2.7 North Brazil Mission
- 2.8 Notes
- 2.9 Oliveria, Betty Attunes, 1977

- 2.10 Passport (Swedish) – Health Certificates
- 2.11 Periodical – English – (Brazilian)
- 2.12 Periodical – English – “The Christian and Missionary Alliance”
- 2.13 Periodical – English – “The Fellowship Forum”
- 2.14 Periodical – English – “Letters Home”
- 2.15 Periodical – English – “Watchword and Truth”
- 2.16 Periodical – Portuguese – “A Federacao”
- 2.17 Periodical – Portuguese – “A Luz”
- 2.18 Periodical – Portuguese – “O Baptista Amazonico”
- 2.19 Periodical – Portuguese – “O Evangelista”
- 2.20 Periodical – Portuguese – “O Jornal Baptista”
- 2.21 Periodical – Portuguese – “O Jovem Christao”
- 2.22 Periodical – Portuguese – “O Norte Baptista”
- 2.23 Periodical – Portuguese – “O Rio-Mar”
- 2.24 Periodical – Portuguese – “Verdade E Luz”
- 2.25 Photo Album
- 2.26 Photographs – Brazil, 1904 – 1935
- 2.27 Photographs – Prominent Individuals
- 2.28 Report, 1935
- 2.29 Smith, Samuel Francis – “My Country ‘tis of Thee”
- 2.30 Taylor, W. C.
- 2.31 Taylor, Z. C.