INTRODUCTION

The John G. Neihardt Ephemera consists of clippings, newsletters and photographs of tributes to Nebraska Poet Laureate and educator. Also included are letters from Neihardt to Thomas W. Wright, 1957-1973, of Hazelwood, Missouri, and Genevieve Paulson of Craig, Missouri, as well as an audiocassette of Neihardt reading poetry selections.

DONOR INFORMATION

Various donors gave Neihardt ephemera to the University of Missouri over the years. Consult the reference staff for complete donor information.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John Gneisenau Neihardt was born near Sharpsburg, Illinois, on 8 January 1881, third child of Nicholas Nathan Neihardt and Alice Culler Neihardt. In 1886 the family moved to a sod house in northwestern Kansas, moving from there to Kansas City in 1888. In 1891 he moved with his mother and sisters to Wayne, Nebraska, where he attended the Nebraska Normal College (now Wayne State College), graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree at age 16. His first book, The Divine Enchantment, was finished at the age of 16 and published.

After teaching at a country school for two terms, he moved to Bancroft, Nebraska, where he worked with an Indian trader among the Omaha Indians. Later he edited a country weekly, the Bancroft Blade, for several years. After that he devoted his time to writing fiction and lyric verse with rapidly increasing national success.

In 1912, at the age of 31, Neihardt began writing his major work, A Cycle of the West, to which he devoted eighteen years. He was made poet laureate of Nebraska by legislative enactment in 1921. He was literary editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch from 1926 to 1938, worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs from 1942 to 1945, and served as lecturer in English and poet in residence at the University of Missouri from 1949 to 1965.

Neihardt was married in 1908 to Mona Martinsen, sculptor and a student of Rodin, the daughter of Rudolph Vincent and Ada Martinsen. The Neihardts had four children: Enid, Sigurd, Hilda, and Alice.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Neihardt Ephemera includes clippings from the last decade of Neihardt’s life. Letters to Thomas W. Wright, 1957-1973, cover mostly professional issues in Neihardt’s publishing career. In his letters to Genevieve Paulson in 1938, he discusses his writing “The Song of Jed Smith” as part of his Cycle of the West series.

Additional clippings, newsletters and photographs document tributes to Neihardt, including: the Folger Theater Group’s stage production of Black Elk Speaks, Neihardt/Black Elk Park in Blair, Nebraska, and the Neihardt Center in Bancroft, Nebraska. Enid Fink Neihardt’s childhood memoir, The Study, deals with the Neihardt family’s early home in Bancroft, Nebraska.
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f. 4  Missouri News Magazine, draft, Thomas W. Wright
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