

# Carl Z. Nelson family papers, 1935-1981

**Size:** .25 linear feet, 1 box

**Acquisition:** Donated to SSIRC in 1982.

**Access:** The collection is open for research.

**Processed by:** Ellen Peterson in 1983.

**Control Num.:** SSIRC MSS P:32

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## Provenance

The papers of Carl Z. Nelson and his family (his wife Emily M. Nelson) and his granddaughter Mrs. D. L. Thompson) were given to the SSIRC in January 1982, by Mrs. Mary Thompson of Silvis, Illinois. The collection consists of a family history, obituaries, a newspaper article by C. Z. Nelson, and articles about him and his family. Most of the material is reproduced as photocopies. Included is correspondence Mrs. Mary Thompson received from John W. Thomson, Professor of Botany at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, regarding her grandfather. Ellen Peterson processed the collection in February 1983.

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## Biographical Sketch

Carl Z. Nelson was born on April 17, 1870, in Småland, Sweden, and grandson of Nils Peter Jonasson and son of Emma Carolina Carlsdotter-Nilsson and Johan Peter Nilsson. In 1872, Johan, Emma and Carl came to the United States, settling in Galesburg. At this time the father Americanized his name to John Nelson and took a job as a blacksmith. Carl came to be known as Charles Zackary. His father died when he was ten, and he quit school to support his mother. By the age of nineteen he was able to attend horticultural school in Denver, Colorado. In October 1893, before graduating, he returned to Galesburg and married Emily Lindstrom. Together, they had seven children. C. Z. Nelson made his living as a painter-decorator but was offered the opportunity to study at many fine places, including the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. He preferred to remain in Galesburg, however, living a simple life. Because of his fine work in the field of botany, the Dodecatheon lutescens flower was named after him. Mr. Nelson served as president of the American Horticultural Society and was an organizer of the Knox County Academy of Science. On June 19, 1939, he was killed instantly after falling off a ladder while painting the exterior of a house. His collection of dried flowers is now part of the flower collection at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

His wife, Emily, was also involved in horticulture and was active in the Knox County Academy of Science until her death on April 11, 1967. Mrs. Mary Thompson, their granddaughter, has recently traced the family history, finding some of their descendants still living near the old Nilsson farm in Fliseryd, Sweden. Other members of the family live in or around the Galesburg, Illinois, area

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## **Content**

The collection contains biographical and genealogical information and correspondence.

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## **Folder Inventory**

1. C.Z. Nelson (1870-1939) and Family. Papers. 1939-1981.  
Biographical Data; Family Genealogy (photocopy)  
Memorial Obituary for C.Z. Nelson.L, (photocopy) June  
Memorial Obituary for Emily M. Nelson. (Photocopy) April 11, 1967.  
Family History Sketch. (Photocopy) written by Judy Rude, 1976.  
Family History Sketch. (typewritten copy by Lilly Setterdahl) written by Judy Rude, 1976.  
Newspaper Article (photocopy) by Lilly Setterdahl. June 19, 1981.  
Letter from Prof. Ingemar Larson, (Dept. of Biology, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois) enclosing material on Dodecatheon 1.. (photocopy), May 18,1981.
  
2. Correspondence. Letter from J.W. Thomson to Mrs. D.L. Thomson (photocopy) June 18, 1975. enclosing (all photocopies): N.C. Fassett to C.Z. Nelson Nov. 25,1936,  
N.C. Fassett to C.Z. Nelson Dec. 8,1936.  
C.Z: Nelson to N.C: Fassett Dec. 16, 1936.  
N.C. Fassett to C.Z. Nelson Jan. 6,1937.  
N.C. Fassett to C.Z. Nelson April 14, 1937.  
E.M. Nelson to N.C. Fassett Dec. 6,1939.  
C.Z. Nelson (1870-1939) Papers. Writings, 1935.  
"An Open Letter. The First Half." (photocopy) March 15,1935.