

Guide to

MS 318

**Sonnichsen Family Papers  
1920-1990**

4 1/2 linear feet

Prepared by Sarah Ashton  
August 1996

Gift of Harold Sonnichsen in 1993.

Citation: Sonnichsen Family Papers, 1920-1990, MS 318, C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library

C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department  
University of Texas at El Paso Library

### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

The Sonnichsen family started out in an area of Denmark that is now part of Germany. They immigrated to the United States because Momme-Melf, C.L. Sonnichsen's grandfather, did not want to join the Danish military. The Sonnichsens moved first to New York, and then to Iowa, because Momme-Melf did not feel safe in New York.

Henry Matthew Sonnichsen (H.M.S.), son of Momme-Melf, was born in Denmark, but grew up in Iowa working very hard, as the family was poor. He met Mary Hults (M.H.S.) and married her in 1899. They first settled in Iowa where Charles Leland was born in 1901, but then moved to Hancock, Minnesota because of the better climate. Henry and Mary tried farming and would have been successful if not for Henry's allergies.

While in Hancock, their second son Lloyd was born in 1903, and third son Harold in 1912. In 1916, the family moved to Wadena, Minnesota. Soon after moving, tragedy struck the Sonnichsen's when Lloyd died of a gunshot wound. In Wadena, the Sonnichsen family was involved in the community through both church and school. Henry worked at various jobs and Mary worked in the community through the Seventh Day Adventists, her church.

Charles Leland graduated from high school in 1920. He went to the University of Minnesota for his bachelor's degree and Harvard for his Master's and Ph. D. He then went on to teach in El Paso at the Texas College of Mines, later renamed the University of Texas at El Paso. Harold finished high school in Wadena and went to Harvard and the Texas College of Mines for undergraduate work, then back to Harvard where he received his Ph.D. in Chemistry.

After the winters got too bad for Henry and Mary Sonnichsen in Minnesota, they moved to El Paso to be near their son, Charles Leland (about 1950). Henry died in 1954, but Mary lived until 1971. Charles Leland lived until 1991, and at this time (1996) Harold is still living and working with his family in Massachusetts.

**SERIES DESCRIPTION**

The Sonnichsen Family Papers are arranged in five series:

Series I. Correspondence, 1920-1990. 42.5 linear inches (8.5 document boxes)

Arranged in three subseries -- Family, Friends and Relatives, and Personal Business. This material includes correspondence between nuclear family members, and with extended family and close friends. The personal business materials include papers about property and funeral arrangements.

Series II. Genealogy, 1937-1990. 2.5 linear inches (5 folders).

Arranged into two subseries -- Correspondence and Other. This material includes correspondence with family members about their genealogy, family trees and family histories.

Series III. Photographs, 1956-1960, n.d. 2.5 linear inches. (8 folders).

Arranged in one series alphabetically. This material includes photocopies of family portraits and snapshots of places of importance to family members.

Series IV. Other, no date. 2 linear inches (4 folders).

Arranged in one series alphabetically. This material includes family memoirs, a scrapbook, and a school book.

Series V. Newspapers, 1940-1984. 3 linear inches (3 folders).

Arranged in one series alphabetically. This material includes photocopies of newspapers from Wadena and Hancock, Minnesota.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Sonnichsen Family Papers contain eleven boxes and consists primarily of correspondence between Leland, Harold and their parents, Henry and Mary. There is also correspondence with cousins, uncles, aunts, other relatives and friends. Besides correspondence, there are some photocopies of photographs, newspapers and genealogy materials. Most of the materials in this collection are photocopies of originals that are still in the possession of Harold Sonnichsen.

The **Correspondence** series incorporates the Family correspondence that includes letters between Leland, Harold, Henry (H.M.S.), and Mary (M.H.S.). Family members have gone back and dated some of the letters. They were a close family and kept in contact over the years from 1920 until 1990. Not all the letters are present, but there are quite a few and a picture can be drawn of life in the Sonnichsen family. The next largest group of correspondence is between the nuclear Sonnichsen family and friends and relatives. This group of people includes friends from Iowa and Minnesota and relatives from the Sonnichsen, Clifton and Hults families (see appendices for family tree). The last subseries is Personal Business which includes materials on the death of Henry Matthew Sonnichsen, and the property in Wadena, Minnesota.

The **Genealogy** series gives the textual history and genealogy of the Clifton and Hults family (Mary's side), while the **Photographs** series shows the portraits of the family and some of the places they lived.

Included with the **Other** series, are the memoirs of H.M.S., M.H.S., and the Sonnichsen Pilgrimage. The memoirs tell the story of the Sonnichsens - how Henry and Mary met, who their descendants are, and what Henry and Mary did with their lives. Both are useful for a family history. There are also photocopies of H.M.S.'s geography book and a scrapbook.

The final series, **Newspapers**, are photocopies of newspapers from Hancock and Wadena, Minnesota for various years (1940, 1966-1969, 1975, 1977, 1981, 1984). These are examples of what was happening in those particular towns, and gives news of family friends.

## PROVENANCE

In 1993, with the dedication of the C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, Harold Sonnichsen (C. L.'s brother) agreed to donate photocopies of the family correspondence. It arrived in three boxes, and in 1996 Harold Sonnichsen signed a deed of gift.

## LITERARY RIGHTS

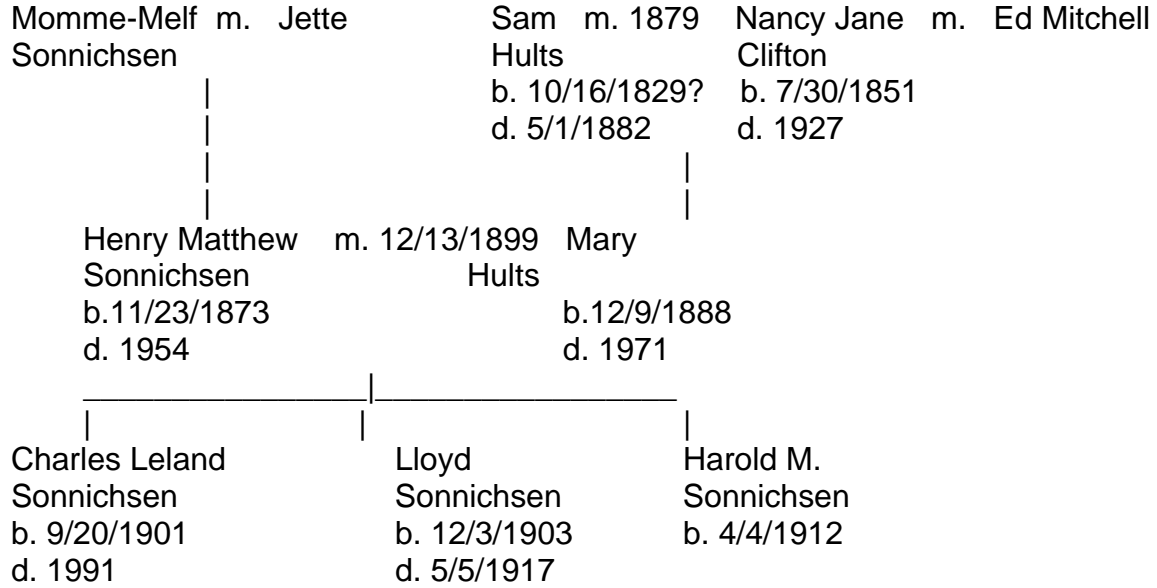
Permission to publish material from the Sonnichsen Family Papers, 1920-1991, must be obtained from the C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, the University of Texas at El Paso Library.

## NOTES TO RESEARCHER

Some of the photocopies are of poor quality.

See also, C. L. Sonnichsen Papers, MS 141 for more family correspondence.

**APPENDICES**



<b>Correspondence</b>		
		<b>Family</b>
1	1	1920, 1922, 1924
	2	Parents 1920-1922
	3	Parents 1923
	4	Parents 1924
	5	1924-1931
	6	Parents 1925
	7	Parents 1926
	8	Parents 1927
	9	Parents 1928
	10	Parents 1929
	11	Parents 1930
2	12	Parents 1931
	13	HMS-MS 1931-1933
	14	1932-1933
	15	Parents 1934-1935
	16	1934-1936
	17	Parents 1936-1938
	18	1937
3	19	Family correspondence 1939
	20	HMS-MS 1939-1940
	21	1940
	22	Parents 1941
	23	1941-1942

Box Folder

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	24	Parents 1942
	25	Parents 1943
4	26	1943-1944
	27	Parents 1944-1945
	28	1945-1947
	29	Parents 1946
	30	Parents 1947
	31	1947-1948
	32	Parents 1948
	33	Parents 1949-1950
5	34	1949-1952
	35	1953-1954
	36	1955-1957
	37	1956-1959
	38	1960-1961
	39	1961-1965, 1968-1970
	40	1962-1963
	41	1964
6	42	1965
	43	1966-1967
	44	1967-1968
	45	1969
	46	Jan. 4, 1970- Sept.12, 1971
	47	1980-1990
	48	Harold & Leland 1960-1979
	49	Harold & Leland 1980-1988

<b>Friends and Relatives</b>		
7	50	Anliker 1989
	51	Bradley 1930, 1939, 1943, 1961, 1964, 1966, 1968-1970
	52	Craig Clifton 1988, 1990, n.d.
	53	Clifton family 1985, 1987-1989, n.d.
	54	Clifton-Mitchell 1932, 1949-1950, 1969, 1980
	55	Dad's birthday, 1953; Funeral, 1954
	56	Aunt Myrtle Dale 1924, 1929-1930
	57	Dosdall 1925, 1929-1930, 1977, 1984
	58	Evans-Rogers 1922-1928, 1930, 1936, 1947, 1963, 1968, 1983, n.d.
	59	Aunt Dora Hamilton, Aunt Mary Williams 1931, 1938, 1940, 1954-1955, 1959-1970
	60	Hults family 1917, 1928-1929, 1931, 1942, 1947, 1955-1956, 1958-1970
	61	Jansen family 1965, 1968, 1972
	62	Lena Jefferies 1965-1970
8	63	Lena Jefferies 1965-1970, n.d.
	64	Grace McArthur 1957, 1963-1965, 1967-1971
	65	G. A. Mary H. S. Earliest Relics 1898, 1907, 1932, 1957, n.d.
	66	Gertie Mynbear Iowa friends 1948, 1955-1960, n.d.
	67	Wallard Neaf 1963-1964, 1974-1976, 1983-1987, n.d.
	68	Parents Church 1922-1923, 1971, 1983, n.d.
	69	Aunt Sarah Sheely 1921, 1930, 1932, 1943, 1947-1948, 1954-1956, 1959- 1967, 1969, 1971
	70	Carol Smith, Keith Smith 1966, 1969, 1973, 1977, 1979-1981, 1984-1987

	71		Uncle Chris Sonnichsen, Ernest Swanson 1917, 1929-1932, 1939-1941,
			1944-1947, 1951, 1954, 1958, 1960-1964, 1966, 1967-1971, 1974, 1984,
			n.d.
	72		Deke Sonnichsen 1936, 1956, 1961, 1967-1968, 1973, 1978, 1988, 1990
	73		H.M. & Mary Sonnichsen Miscellaneous friends 1937, 1939, 1941-1942,
			1947, 1953-1968, 1971
	74		Sonnichsen Kinfolks 1926-1927, 1930-1932, 1937, 1939-1942, 1945-
			1946,
			1954, 1956, 1958, 1963-1966, n.d.
9	75		Cousin Mina Sonnichsen 1939, 1941-1947, 1950-1951, 1954-1957, 1960-
			1965, n.d.
	76		Sundby 1952, 1960-1965, 1968, 1970, n.d.
	77		Taylor 1988-1990
	78		Wadena friends 1960-1961, 1991
	79		Wadena, Minnesota 1979-1980, 1984-1985, 1987
	80		Wedding 1982
	81		Wilmington 1988-1990
<b>Personal Business</b>			
	82		HMS-business 1925, 1934-1935, 1954-1955, 1983
	83		Wadena property 1953-1956, 1960, 1965-1966, 1971-1973
<b>Geneology</b>			
<b>Correspondence</b>			
	84		Clifton family- papers from Esther Brigham 1963-1967, 1970, 1973-1974,

		1983, 1985
	85	Clifton family- Ruth Clifton 1982-1983, 1985, 1990
	86	Clifton-Hults family papers 1937, 1951, 1959-1968, 1971, 1977, 1982-1985,
		1990

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		<b>Other</b>
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	87	Clifton-Richardson geneology 1935
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	88	Betty Wilmington Gillan 1936
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## Photographs

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10	89	Hancock Pix
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	90	Hults family pictures
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	91	L. Irish
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	92	Memoir of HMS & MHS photographs
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	93	Memoir of HMS & MHS Pix ready
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	94	Photo scrapbook
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	95	Sonnichsen family photographs 1956-1960, n.d.
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	96	Sonnichsen photographs
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## Other

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	97	Memories of HMS & MHS original final copy
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	98	Scrapbook
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	99	Henry Matthew Sonnichsen's Geography book
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Box Folder

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	10 0		The Sonnichsen Pilgrimage, n.d.
<b>Newspapers</b>			
	10 1		Hancock, Minnesota 1966-1969, 1975, 1977
	10 2		Newspapers 1940, 1969, 1981, 1984
11	10 3		Newspapers 1981