

DeKalb History Center

Nelson Severinghaus Collection

Scope and content: The Nelson Severinghaus Collection is a group of letters, school programs and photographs primarily from Rock Chapel Church and Rock Chapel School near Lithonia.

Provenance: Gift of Nelson Severinghaus, 1987, ACC# 1987.52.

Access: Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. Reproductions of photographs and permission to publish materials from this collection must be requested from the Archivist, DeKalb History Center. Citations should be made as follows:

Description of specific item; Severinghaus Collection, DeKalb History Center Archives.

Processed by Jill Sweetapple, 2010.

Size: One half document box.

Brief History of Rock Chapel: According to Vivian Price's *History of DeKalb County*, the Methodist congregation formed about 1825 in a log meeting house. It was given the nickname "Soap Factory" because there was an old ash hopper for making soap on the premises. During the Civil War the male congregation fell to 18 members and during slavery years slaves joined the church with their masters and are listed as Smith's John, etc. in the membership roll. Lithonia and Redan churches began from Rock Chapel Church as well. On the 1930s, there was a tabernacle across the street from the church for summer church camp meetings. It is believed that a WPA project funded landscape walls around the school made of the local granite. Papers in the Severinghaus Collection include a certificate making Nelson Severinghaus trustee of the Rock Chapel School District in 1941 and 1947, and a 1939 letter asks for permission to build a new school building. Rock Chapel community is about 4 miles from Lithonia. The site of the school is on Rockbridge Road about 1 ½ miles west of the current (2010) Rock Chapel Grammar School.

Description: The Severinghaus Collection consists of primarily photographs of Rock Chapel in the 1950s stored in the Photograph Subject Files. The papers in the document box include report cards, legal papers, newspaper articles and photographs of Rock Chapel School and Rock Chapel Methodist Church. The materials were collected primarily by Mrs. Nelson (Josephine Thompson) Severinghaus, who wrote for the Atlanta Journal and had ties with the library as well, helping to start the first DeKalb bookmobile service.

Subject Headings: Where possible, Library of Congress Subject Headings have been used.

Main entry: Severinghaus, Nelson

Subject/Added entries: Rock Chapel Methodist Church (DeKalb County, GA)
 Methodist Church--Education--United States
 Methodist Church--Georgia.
 Methodist Church--Georgia--History--19th century.
 Lithonia, GA

Box	Folder Contents	Dates	
1	1	Articles Saturday Evening Post article entitled "Norman Rockwell Visits a Country School," dated 11/2/1946; Oak Mountain, Georgia. Includes a photograph of Norman Rockwell and school children by Kenneth Rogers. Stored in oversized misc items box 2, copy here. Photocopies of various newspaper clippings relating to Rock Chapel and Lithonia; publications include the Lithonia Journal and The Constitution. Dates vary but are primarily from 1939.	
	2	Certificates Two certificates naming Nelson Severinghaus a trustee of Rock Chapel School District	1941-1947 8/22/1944 & 10/4/1938.
	3	Check Stub A check stub for the \$300 prize winnings for Rock Chapel School from the Atlanta Journal. Handwritten notes say, "Cashed Oct. 27, 1945 Mrs. Nelson Severinghaus on receipt at The People's Bank; 4H Club Contest - won by Rock Chapel School." Signed by J.R.S., People's Bank.	Oct 27, 1945
	4	Correspondence from: Nelson Severinghaus to Congressman Robert M. Ramspeck regarding a new school building for Rock Chapel Frank A. March of the Works Progress Administration to Congressman Frank Welchel regarding the a new school building for Rock Chapel H.A. Rawlins of the Works Progress Administration to Nelson Severinghaus regarding a new school building for Rock Chapel Congressman B. Frank Welchel to Josephine Severinghaus regarding a new school building for Rock Chapel Congressman B. Frank Welchel to Josephine Severinghaus regarding a new school building for Rock Chapel Congressman B. Frank Welchel to Josephine Severinghaus regarding a new school building for Rock Chapel Congressman B. Frank Welchel to Josephine Severinghaus regarding a new school building for Rock Chapel	6/20/1939 6/26/1939 9/8/1939 6/24/1939 6/28/1939 8/24/1939 7/21/1939.

Congressman Robert Ramspeck to J. B. and W. A. Bond regarding a new
school building for Rock Chapel 6/22/1939.

Box	Folder Contents	Dates
1	4 (cont)	
	Correspondence (cont)	
	Assistant Supervisor of Agricultural Education C. M. Reed to Josephine Severinghaus regarding establishment of a canning plant in Lithonia	3/13/1943
	Augustine Sams to Josephine Severinghaus describing previous owners of land lots in Rock Chapel	2/29/1968
5	<i>Easter Glory</i>	
	Program of service music by Haldor Lillenas and Ferne Winters; published in Kansas City, Missouri, 2 copies, fragile	1937
6	Histories	
	Typed manuscript entitled "Some Facts about DeKalb County and Georgia" and "Stephen Decatur," author and date unknown.	
	Typed manuscript discussing Georgia history and listing DeKalb County Territorial Transfers and Superior Court Transfers.	
	Typed manuscript entitled "Georgia's First Fairs" discussing settlers by J. Severinghaus, read at the DeKalb Historical Society October 1952	
	A group of typed articles entitled "We Study Our Rock Chapel Community" authored by the seventh grade of Rock Chapel School	1960-1961
	Article titles include:	
	Rock Chapel School	
	History of Rock Chapel Methodist Church	
	Industries in Rock Chapel about a Hundred Years Ago	
	Rock Chapel Cemetery	
7	Land Survey	
	Survey of Ownership of Land at Rock Chapel, consisting of five drawings. Includes land lots 195, 194, 222, 227, and 254.	
8	Miscellaneous Notes	
	Handwritten notes of talk by Dr. Wilbur Kurtz for the DeKalb Historical Society	5/30/1962
	Handwritten notes by Mrs. Nelson Severinghaus regarding refreshments for school, date unknown.	
9	Newsletter	
	St. Mark Church publication "The Remarker," four pages	10/4/1942

Box	Folder Contents	Dates
1	10	Photographs Two black and white photographs of school children at their desks and outdoors, subjects and dates unknown but likely taken at Rock Chapel School Photocopy of 1940 (?) photograph from the Programs folder
	11	Programs Rock Chapel P.T.A. presents "Aaron Slick From Punkin' Crick" at the School Auditorium 5/29/1940. Commencement exercises and programs for Rock Chapel School, 2 copies 6/6/1940 1 copy 5/25/1944 Dedication of Rock Chapel School, handwritten May 1939, 1940 Includes a black and white photograph of the school and three copies "Why the Garden Quarreled" by the Rock Chapel School at the Rock Chapel Auditorium, made by Barbara McFalls 5/24/1944 "The Rock Chapel Methodist Church Wishes to Express Its Appreciation to the Following," date unknown.
	12	Report Cards Ben Severinghaus 1941-42 Tommy Severinghaus 1941-42 Public Schools of DeKalb County, Rock Chapel School; signed by Rozelle Shirley, principal, and Martha Johnson, teacher.