

Compiled by Eric Fair, 2009

Provenance

The papers were donated by Sasha Rubel in two separate accessions, dated February 2009 and March 2010. They were compiled by Sasha Rubel from her mother Nina's materials.

Physical Description

10 boxes (5.6 linear ft.)

Access

The records are accessible to the public within applicable copyright restrictions and limited to use at the Champaign County Historical Archives of The Urbana Free Library.

Biographical Note

Nina Rubel was born to Holger and Margrethe Marcus in Horsens, Denmark on October 21, 1932. After the Nazi occupation of Denmark in 1940 during the Second World War, the Marcuses, due to their Jewish heritage, were forced to flee to Sweden after the Nazis began mass arrests of Jews in 1943 as part of their wider "Final Solution" campaign. Upon her return to Denmark after the war, Rubel took an apprenticeship in journalism at the age of fifteen, and writing would remain a lifelong passion.

At 19 Rubel first came to the United States, writing about her experiences in Danish newspapers. Additionally, during her travels she wrote for several smaller newspapers across the country. These journeys eventually took her to Madison, Wisconsin, where she met a young graduate student named Lee Rubel. The two began dating, and after Nina returned to Denmark, Lee proposed marriage via telegram, and the couple were married in a Danish palace in September 1954. Lee Rubel went on to be a distinguished mathematician at the University of Illinois, with over 200 publications to his name. The couple had two children, Mark and Natasha.

Lee's appointment to the faculty of the University of Illinois brought the Rubels to Champaign-Urbana. This became her first permanent home since her youth, and she soon returned to writing. In 1974 she began writing feature articles for *The Urbana Courier* until that newspaper's demise in 1979, and then the *News-Gazette* until the mid 1980's, when she began freelance writing for various newspapers and journals in the area. Her writings captured the life and interests of the breadth of those calling east central Illinois home. Additionally the Rubel household would become a social center for the area, creating a lasting network of friends in the intellectual and artistic communities of Champaign-Urbana.

Rubel struggled with her health in her later years. She fought a long battle with cancer, beginning with her diagnosis of breast cancer in 1990. In 1999 Rubel faced another blow – ovarian cancer. Despite poor odds and at least three recurrences, Rubel would fight the disease for six years before finally succumbing to complications in December 2005.

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Papers, ca. 1890 – 2006

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Scope and Content

The Nina Rubel Papers span the entire duration of the twentieth century. The materials are particularly robust in her professional working files, and document the thought processes Rubel undertook as she developed her feature writing, including working files and correspondence. Also included in this material is documentation of the planning and permissions for her monograph, *Heartland Beat*, which was a collection of her selected writings. Additionally many aspects of her personal life are well documented. Rubel kept meticulous lists of her day-to-day activities, and these are well represented in the collection. Her journeys to Europe and Asia were also an important part of her life, and these travels are represented by her travel diaries. Finally, the history of the Rubel/Marcus family is represented, including letters between her mother and father, and between her and her stepmother.

Arrangement

Subgroup 1 – Professional Papers: This subgroup documents Nina Rubel’s writing career with publications such as *The Urbana Courier* and the *News-Gazette*, as well as the planning and development of her book *Heartland Beat*.

Column Working Files: Drafts, ideas, notes, and correspondence regarding the creation of features for various publications.

Correspondence: Correspondence with reporters, publishers, and subjects regarding potential and realized writing projects

Subject Files: Files regarding specific topics related to Rubel’s professional life. This includes a listing of articles she wrote as a feature writer for *The Urbana Courier*.

Subgroup 2 – Personal Papers: This subgroup documents aspects of Nina Rubel’s life outside her career as a writer as represented in the materials of the collection.

Correspondence: Correspondence with family and close friends, especially weighted toward the later years of her life.

Diaries and Journals: This series holds a number of different types of personal writings by Ms. Rubel, including her lists of daily activities, travel journals, and appointment calendars.

Health Files: This includes notes, memos, and correspondence regarding the health crises Ms. Rubel struggled with during the later years of her life.

Genealogical and Family Files: Several file types that document the Rubel/Marcus family. Especially relevant are the letters in Danish between Ms. Rubel’s mother Margrethe and her father Marcus. Also included are family letters, genealogical research on the family, and family personal documents.

Financial Records: Records of financial transactions of the Rubel family. Of note is the several real estate transactions recorded here.

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Container List

Box 1

Subgroup 1: Professional Papers

Series 1: Column Working Files

- Folder 1: Column Working Files – Column Ideas, n.d.
- Folder 2: Column Working Files – Freelance Article Drafts, n.d.
- Folder 3: Column Working Files – Personal Column Ideas, 1962-ca. 1995
- Folder 4: Column Working Files – Column Ideas, 1978-1986
- Folder 5: Column Working Files – Working Files, 1978-1991
- Folder 6: Column Working Files – Book Permissions, 1980-1981
- Folder 7: Column Working Files – *News-Gazette* Story Ideas, 1980-1995
- Folder 8: Column Working Files – Story Ideas, 1980-1989
- Folder 9: Column Working Files – Non *News-Gazette* Articles, 1983, 1997
- Folder 10: Column Working Files – Freelance Articles, 1983-1999
- Folder 11: Column Working Files, 1987-1999
- Folder 12: Column Working Files – Column Drafts, ca. 1990-1999 [1 of 2]
- Folder 13: Column Working Files – Column Drafts, ca. 1990-1999 [2 of 2]
- Folder 14: Column Working Files, 1991-1998
- Folder 15: Column Working Files – Column Drafts – Lauritz Melchior, 1997
- Folder 16: Column Working Files – Freelance Column Ideas, 1997
- Folder 17: Column Working Files – Captain Rat and the Blind Rivets, May 1997
- Folder 18: Column Working Files – Articles – *Alumnuni*, 1997-1998
- Folder 19: Column Working Files – Barrington Coleman Interview and Article Drafts, 1997-1998

Box 2

Subgroup 1: Professional Papers

Series 2: Correspondence

- Folder 1: Correspondence, 1980
- Folder 2: Correspondence, 1981
- Folder 3: Correspondence – *Heartland Beat* book, 1981-1985 [1 of 2]
- Folder 4: Correspondence – *Heartland Beat* book, 1981-1985 [2 of 2]
- Folder 5: Correspondence, 1982
- Folder 6: Correspondence, 1986-1997

Series 3: Subject Files

- Folder 7: Subject Files – Authored Article List, 1974-1982
- Folder 8: Subject Files – Annual *Courier* Party, 1980-1982

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Box 3

Subgroup 2: Personal Papers

Series 1: Correspondence

- Folder 1: Correspondence – Congratulations on the Birth of Natasha Rubel, 1964 [1 of 2]
- Folder 2: Correspondence – Congratulations on the Birth of Natasha Rubel, 1964 [2 of 2]
- Folder 3: Correspondence – Family, 1965-2002
- Folder 4: Correspondence – Family, 1966-2005 [1 of 2]
- Folder 5: Correspondence – Family, 1966-2005 [2 of 2]
- Folder 6: Correspondence – Annual Christmas Letter, 1978
- Folder 7: Correspondence – Natasha to Nina and Lee Rubel, 1983-1984
- Folder 8: Correspondence, 1983-1988
- Folder 9: Correspondence – Letters and E-mails with Danish Correspondents, 1983-2005
- Folder 10: Correspondence – Lee Rubel Condolences, 1986-1995
- Folder 11: Correspondence – Advice and Complaint Letters, 1988-1997
- Folder 12: Correspondence, 1998-2005 [1 of 2]
- Folder 13: Correspondence, 1998-2005 [2 of 2]
- Folder 14: Correspondence – Commercial Real Estate, 1999
- Folder 15: Correspondence – Book Club, 1999-2004

Box 4

Subgroup 2: Personal Papers

Series 1: Correspondence

- Folder 1: Correspondence – Irma Marcus, 2000
- Folder 2: Correspondence, 2000-2004
- Folder 3: Correspondence – Sasha Rubel, 2001-2006
- Folder 4: Correspondence, 2004-2005
- Folder 5: Correspondence – “Get Well,” 2005
- Folder 6: Correspondence – Condolences, 2005
- Folder 7: Correspondence – List of Get Well Wishes and Condolences, 2005

Series 2: Health Files

- Folder 8: Health Files – Health Notes, 1968-2005
- Folder 9: Health Files – 1999 Ovarian Cancer Diagnosis and Treatment, 1999
- Folder 10: Health Files – 1999 Surgery and Recovery, 1999-2000
- Folder 11: Health Files – Correspondence and Notes Regarding Treatment and Condition, 1999-2004
- Folder 12: Health Files – 2001 Cancer Recurrence and Surgery, 2001
- Folder 13: Health Files – Vitreous Hemorrhage/Vision Loss, 2001
- Folder 14: Health Files – Notes for Meeting with Dr. John Shaffer, 2001-2002
- Folder 15: Health Files – 2002 Cancer Recurrence, 2002
- Folder 16: Health Files – Amnesia Incident, 2002
- Folder 17: Health Files – 2004 Cancer Recurrence, 2004-2005

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Series 3: Diaries and Journals

- Folder 18: Diaries and Journals – Past Lists, 1991-1992
- Folder 19: Diaries and Journals – Past Lists, 1994
- Folder 20: Diaries and Journals – Past Lists, January-August, 1997
- Folder 21: Diaries and Journals – Past Lists, August, 1997
- Folder 22: Diaries and Journals – Past Lists, January-October 1998
- Folder 23: Diaries and Journals – Past Lists, 1999 [various dates]

Box 5

Subgroup 2: Personal Papers

Series 3: Diaries and Journals

- Folder 1: Diaries and Journals – Past Lists, 2003
- Folder 2: Diaries and Journals – Past Lists, 2004
- Folder 3: Diaries and Journals – Past Lists, 2005
- Folder 4: Diaries and Journals – Social Engagements, 1969-2003
- Folder 5: Diaries and Journals – Social Engagements, 1976-2001
- Folder 6: Diaries and Journals – Social Engagements, 1997-2000
- Folder 7: Diaries and Journals – Travel Diary – France, n.d.
- Folder 8: Diaries and Journals – Travel Diary – Nice, n.d.
- Folder 9: Diaries and Journals – Travel Diary – France, 1965
- Folder 10: Diaries and Journals – Travel Diary – Italy, 1966
- Folder 11: Diaries and Journals – Travel Diary – Greece, 1976
- Folder 12: Diaries and Journals – Travel Diary – Italy and France, 1980
- Folder 13: Diaries and Journals – Travel Files – Chicago, 1980-2004

Box 6

Subgroup 2: Personal Papers

Series 3: Diaries and Journals

- Folder 1: Diaries and Journals – Travel Files – Research for France, 1986-2003
- Folder 2: Diaries and Journals – Travel Files – New Harmony, Indiana, 1992
- Folder 3: Diaries and Journals – Travel Diary – Hong Kong, 1993
- Folder 4: Diaries and Journals – Travel Diary – France, 1998
- Folder 5: Diaries and Journals – Travel Diary – France, 1998-1999
- Folder 6: Diaries and Journals – Travel Diary – Cannes, 1998-2000
- Folder 7: Diaries and Journals – Travel Diary – France, 2000
- Folder 8: Diaries and Journals – Travel Files – Lyric Opera, n.d.
- Folder 9: Diaries and Journals – Movie Lists – 1996-2000
- Folder 10: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1980
- Folder 11: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1981
- Folder 12: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1982
- Folder 13: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1983
- Folder 14: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1985
- Folder 15: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1986
- Folder 16: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1987
- Folder 17: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1988

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Box 7

Subgroup 2: Personal Papers

Series 3: Diaries and Journals

Folder 1: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1989
Folder 2: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1990
Folder 3: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1991
Folder 4: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1992
Folder 5: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1993
Folder 6: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1994
Folder 7: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1995
Folder 8: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1996
Folder 9: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1997
Folder 10: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1998
Folder 11: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 1999
Folder 12: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 2000
Folder 13: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 2001
Folder 14: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 2002
Folder 15: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 2003
Folder 16: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 2004
Folder 17: Diaries and Journals – Appointment Calendars, 2005

Box 8

Subgroup 2: Personal Papers

Series 4: Genealogical and Family Files

Folder 1: Genealogical and Family Files – Family Documents, ca. 1890-1956 [Danish]
Folder 2: Genealogical and Family Files – Marcus Family Letters, 1894-1942 [Danish]
Folder 3: Genealogical and Family Files – Report Cards, Margrethe and Holger Marcus, 1914, 1917 [Danish]
Folder 4: Genealogical and Family Files – Marcus Family Letters, 1918 [1 of 2 - Danish]
Folder 5: Genealogical and Family Files – Marcus Family Letters, 1918 [includes transcriptions - 2 of 2]
Folder 6: Genealogical and Family Files – Correspondence between Margrethe and Holger Marcus, 1918-1920 [Danish]
Folder 7: Genealogical and Family Files – Correspondence with Holger Marcus, 1918-1920 [Danish]
Folder 8: Genealogical and Family Files – Wedding Documents – Margrethe and Holger Marcus, 1924 [Danish]
Folder 9: Genealogical and Family Files – List of Family Films, 1937-1967
Folder 10: Genealogical and Family Files – Nina Rubel Childhood Documents, 1938-1946 [Danish]
Folder 11: Genealogical and Family Files – Nina Rubel [Marcus] Correspondence, 1945-1950 [Danish]
Folder 12: Genealogical and Family Files – Transcript of Professional Meeting, Holger Marcus, 1946 [Danish]
Folder 13: Genealogical and Family Files – Personal Documents, Nina Rubel, 1954-1993
Folder 14: Genealogical and Family Files – Solveig Marcus Letters, 1964-1965 [Danish]
Folder 15: Genealogical and Family Files – Holger Marcus Information, 1969 [Danish]
Folder 16: Genealogical and Family Files – Holger Marcus Estate Files, 1971-1972 [Danish]
Folder 17: Genealogical and Family Files – Solveig Marcus Letters, 1980-1982 [Danish]
Folder 18: Genealogical and Family Files – Inheritance from Valborg Solveig Marcus, 1982 [Danish]

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Folder 19: Genealogical and Family Files – Estate Files, Valborg Solveig Marcus, 1982-1985 [Danish]

Folder 20: Genealogical and Family Files – Lee and Nina Rubel End of Life Wishes, 1983-2002

Folder 21: Genealogical and Family Files – Manuscript: Nathan Jacobsen and Frederikke Furst, 1984 [Danish]

Folder 22: Genealogical and Family Files – Marcus Family Genealogy, 1986-1987 [Danish]

Folder 23: Genealogical and Family Files – Lee Rubel Information, 1991-1995

Folder 24: Genealogical and Family Files – Computer Instructions from Lee Rubel to Nina, ca. 1995

Folder 25: Genealogical and Family Files – Dick Detzner and Natasha Rubel Art Shows, 1998-2002 [1 of 3]

Folder 26: Genealogical and Family Files – Dick Detzner and Natasha Rubel Art Shows, 1998-2002 [2 of 3]

Folder 27: Genealogical and Family Files – Dick Detzner and Natasha Rubel Art Shows, 1998-2002 [3 of 3]
– photographs]

Box 9

Subgroup 2: Personal Papers

Series 5: Financial Records

Folder 25: Financial Records – Sale of “Rubelton,” 1964-1983

Folder 26: Financial Records – Real Estate Files, 719 West Elm Street, 1968-1987

Folder 27: Financial Records – Real Estate Files, 1986

Folder 28: Financial Records – House Shopping Information, 1987-1998

Folder 29: Financial Records – Real Estate Files, 812 West Green Street, Champaign, 1995

Folder 30: Financial Records – Real Estate Files, 401 West Nevada Street, Urbana, 1995