



CLARA THOMAS ARCHIVES

**Inventory of the
Virginia Rock fonds**

Inventory #F0600

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F0600 - Virginia Rock fonds

Fonds/Collection Number: F0600

Title: Virginia Rock fonds

Dates: 1956-2007

Extent: 2 m of textual records

**Biographical Sketch/
Administrative History:** Virginia Rock, writer, advocate and educator, was born in 1923. Rock received her bachelor's degree in English from the University of Michigan in 1944. After teaching for two years at a high school in Michigan, Rock returned to earn a master's degree in English, but changed her field to American Studies and began teaching university-level students. After receiving her degree, Rock accepted a full-time position at University of Louisville, where she taught English from 1948 to 1950. Requiring a doctoral degree to continue teaching, Rock studied English and American literature at Duke University for a year before deciding that University of Minnesota would be better suited for her doctoral research. Rock received an American Association of University Women scholarship for her studies at Minnesota, and started her doctoral degree in 1954. Rock was teaching an introductory American culture course when she first read the collection of essays titled, "I'll take my stand : the South and the Agrarian tradition," written by the Twelve Southerners in 1930. Having grown up on a farm, Rock connected with the Southern Agrarians on both a personal and academic level, choosing to write about all twelve for her doctoral dissertation as no one had succeeded in writing about the entire group. Rock corresponded with Donald Davidson, a Southern Agrarian and "keeper" of the group's archives, and arranged to meet him in 1956 at the Fugitives' Reunion at Vanderbilt University. Davidson supplied Rock with materials he had collected that were not available elsewhere, providing the basis for Rock's primary research about the Southern Agrarians and their symposium. Rock corresponded with other Agrarians and traveled to Princeton, Yale, Harvard, Texas and Vanderbilt University to access letters, documents and other archival material. She studied the Agrarians' personal, family and regional histories, their ideas on social issues, and drew on their novels, essays, and literary and social criticisms, resulting in her dissertation, "The making and meaning of 'I'll take my stand' : a study in utopian conservatism, 1925-1939." At the time of its completion in 1961, Rock was teaching at Michigan State University but accepted an invitation to teach at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland, for the following year. She returned to Michigan State in 1964, and then moved to Toronto to teach at York University in 1965. She helped found the Canadian Association for American Studies and planned its first conference in 1965. In 1969, she became the first woman to be appointed Master of Stong College, where she served until 1978. As both a professor and an advocate, Rock focused on the literature of the southern United States, but also introduced the work of female writers to a male-oriented curriculum, actively supported and promoted the Canadian Women's Studies Association, designed and instructed courses that helped define the Women's Studies program at York University and encouraged students to present their research in public -- some of the many factors that led to Rock receiving the Constance E. Hamilton Award from Toronto City Council in 2006. Rock is the author of "The Twelve Southerners : biographical essays" in "I'll take my stand" (1962), "The fugitive-Agrarians in response to social change" (1967), "Agrarianism" in "A bibliographical guide to the study of southern literature" (1969), "They took their stand: the emergence of the Southern Agrarians" (1976), and other articles related to her research and work that took her across North America and Europe.

Scope and Content: Fonds consists of material related to Virginia Rock's research for her doctoral dissertation and other academic writing pertaining to the Twelve Southern Agrarians. Documents include research notes and index cards, photocopies of newspaper clippings, book reviews, literary criticisms, journal articles, and photocopies of material written by or about the Southern Agrarians regarding their lives and work, as well as their correspondence with Rock. The fonds also contains Rock's personal and professional correspondence, drafts of Rock's final dissertation and articles, and documents from Rock's work as a professor at York University, including information about Stong College, syllabi and reading lists,

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information about symposiums she attended, and the text for her speech on being an Americanist in Canada. An issue of the Polish magazine "Ameryka," featuring an article about Virginia Rock, has been added to the Special Collections; an English translation is available in the fonds.

Location of originals: Originals of the Southern Agrarians' correspondence can be found at the libraries, archives, and special collections of Vanderbilt University, Yale University, and Princeton University.

Restrictions on Access and Use: No restrictions on access.

Finding Aid: File list available online.

URL of Finding Aid: <http://archivesfa.library.yorku.ca/submissions/fonds/ON00370-f0000600.htm>

Accruals: The fonds comprises the following accessions: 2011-021. Further accruals may be expected.

Provenance Access Points: Rock, Virginia J.

Date of creation: 2010/09/01
Date of last revision: 2011/09/26