

BEARD PAPERS
JAMES BEARD PAPERS
BEARD / RICHARD NELSON PAPERS

- Provenance:** Collected by the Reed College special collections over the decades; Beard's will and related papers are from the college administration. The files of Richard Nelson, a student and then co-teacher in cooking classes with Beard, were a gift of his nephew, Greg Nelson, in early 2017.
- Ownership:** Reed College claims physical ownership of the collection.
- Access:** Please contact the Special Collections Librarian at Reed College.
- Size:** The James Beard Papers consist of 7 manuscript boxes, or 3 linear feet.
- Processed by:** Mark Kuestner, Caroline Reul, Gay Walker
- Date:** January 23, 2015; Spring 2017

Biography

James Beard was born in Portland, Oregon on May 5, 1903. He died in New York City on January 21, 1985. His parents, Elizabeth and John Beard lived in Portland, Oregon where his mother operated a hotel and his father worked in a customs house. His family also spent time in the town of Gearhart on the Oregon Coast. His mother had a Chinese cook who exposed Beard to Asian cuisine. His interest in food and cooking began when he was very young.

Beard attended Reed College for a semester in 1920 with the class of 1924 but did not graduate. He was awarded an honorary degree by Reed in 1976.

James Beard had a long and distinguished career in the culinary world, teaching cooking classes, publishing numerous cookbooks, as well as appearing on television to promote cooking. His personal collection of his own cookbooks is held in the Reediana collection of Reed library's special collections.

Biography of Richard Nelson

Richard Nelson was born in 1925 in Pierre, South Dakota, to a ranching family. After high school in 1943, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and enrolled in the Army Air Force Technical School. He next attended the University of Kansas and then Pasadena Playhouse where he

studied set design and lighting. In the late 1940s, he moved to New York and began working as an interior decorator for Joseph Platt Associates. During this time, Nelson met James Beard among other notable figures in the culinary world. Beard encouraged Nelson as a novice, then as a mentor and later as an associate in the field. In 1977, Nelson left his work as an interior designer to cook full time.

Nelson began by assisting James Beard, who taught cooking classes in Seaside, Oregon and Honolulu, Hawaii but soon branched out to open Richard Nelson Cooking Classes (RNCC) in Portland, Oregon. Courses took place in Portland during the winter months and in Astoria during the summer. Nelson was a founding member of the International Association of Cooking Schools and served as president from 1980-1982. He also served on the advisory board of the American Institute of Wine and Food.

Nelson wrote articles for the Oregonian including weekly columns “Nelson Talks Food” (1980-1981) and “Kitchen Basics” (1986-1987), and had a daily spot on KXL Radio during the early 1980s. In the fall of 1983, Nelson’s first and only book, *Richard Nelson’s American Cooking*, was published. The book sold well until a controversy as to the authorship of some of the recipes arose. Nelson stepped back as a public culinary personality after the incident but continued to teach cooking for years afterward. Richard Nelson died in 1999.

Scope and Contents

The James Beard Papers consist of some correspondence, biographical information, menu and cooking materials, news clippings of his career and life, as well as a printed finding aid of his papers held by the University of Wyoming, and a sheet of U.S. postage stamps, all in Box 1. Boxes 2-7 contain the teaching and cooking school materials of Richard Nelson which include clippings, notes, and photographs.

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