

# Ralph Eswein

Compiled by Jacinda Marquis, UWSP, 2024

[Click here for digital Ralph Eswein records from the Forest History Association of Wisconsin Biographical Files at the UWSP Nelis R. Kampenga University Archives, Collection 104A.](#)

## Biographical Summary

Ralph Eswein

(November 13, 1945-February 19, 2021)

Ralph James Eswein was born in 1945 to Johannah Gjertsen and Arthur Ross Eswein. He grew up in Port Edwards, Wisconsin and studied cartography and climatology at the University of Wisconsin-Lacrosse. In 1971, he moved back to Black River Falls and married Andrea Jean Scholze the following year. In 1976, he began work with the Co-op Trout Program for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and in the late 1980's, he relocated to Jackson County to work as a surveyor. Ralph spent much of his time in southeastern Jackson County hunting and mapping the abandoned logging railroad grades and collecting old lumber photographs that he later used as resources for his book and film.

Eswein is the author of *Logging Dilemma in the Big Swamp: A Late 1800's History of Harvesting in the Last Virgin Pine Forest of West Central Wisconsin*. He produced a film of the book in a Ken Burns-style documentary, published by the Monroe County Historical Society in 1995. After 30 years of working in forest conservation, he retired in 2006.

## UWSP Archives

The Nelis R. Kampenga University Archives and Area Research Center at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point holds a portion of Ralph Eswein's personal and business records, which is described in the folder list below.

For access to the collection please contact the archives at 715-346-2586 or email [archives@uwsp.edu](mailto:archives@uwsp.edu).

Collection 104A - Forest History Association of Wisconsin – Biographical Files

Box 31 VHS 1<sup>i</sup> Live Canals and Dams  
VHS 2 Final music + Stump to ship  
VHS 3 Heart the Burn  
VHS 4 River shots  
VHS 5 Weber's tree sawing  
VHS 6 Video Narration  
VHS 7 Ralph E. Interview  
VHS 8 Logging video + Bluff photos  
VHS 9 Sound for film  
VHS 10 Logging Pictures  
VHS 11 Last Credits and Revised inputs

- VHS 12 Nature Recording + awards
- VHS 13 Wisconsin Stories, Logging
- VHS 14 Final pictures + Music for film
- VHS 15 Extra Photos
- Box 32
  - 1 Logging Along the Black River (1680-1850)
  - 2 Halls Creek Sawmill & Map
  - 3 Olson Sawmill, Pine City
  - 4 Notes on Tolden Mound by Ralph E
  - 5 Black River log marks, end marks, and side marks
- Cassette 1<sup>ii</sup> Fiddle and Banjo Recordings
- Cassette 2 Final Music & nature recording
- Cassette 3 Logging soundtrack
- Cassette 4 Woods recording
- Cassette 5 Logging Dilemma soundtrack
- Cassette 6 Bagstad Original
- Cassette 7 Railroad background

### **Additional Resources**

<https://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/20047096/Ralph-James-Eswein/wall>

Book URL <https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/999802024202121>

YouTube link to film <https://youtu.be/2gaknXp5kOw?si=Hq3YaG0yHhyzi7dW>

Historical Article about Wisconsin Logging <https://wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS409>

Additional Background to Wisconsin Logging [Standing Tall: Logging Industry Key to E.C.'s Early Days - the... \(volumeone.org\)](#)

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<sup>i</sup> The VHS tapes are pieces and scenes from his film, Logging Dilemma.

<sup>ii</sup> Cassett tapes vary from the narration of Logging Dilemma and background music for the film.