

Theodore Wirth Collection

M/A 1999.01.01-03

This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

May 16, 2016

James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library
300 Nicollet Mall
Minneapolis, MN, 55401
612-543-8200
specialcoll@hclib.org

Table of Contents

<u>Summary Information</u>	3
<u>Biography</u>	4
<u>Description of the Collection</u>	4
<u>Controlled Access Headings</u>	5
<u>Index to Letterpress Correspondence</u>	5
<u>Collection Inventory</u>	10

Summary Information

Repository	James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library
Creator - Author	Wirth, Theodore, 1863-1949
Title	Theodore Wirth Collection
Date	1899-2000
Extent	1.08 Linear feet
Language	English

Biography

Theodore Wirth was born on November 30, 1863 in Winterthur, Switzerland and emigrated alone to the United States in 1888. He died on January 29, 1949. He served as the Superintendent of the Minneapolis Park System 1906-1935, during which time the city's parks expanded from 1,780 acres to 5,241, doubled its length from 31.1 miles to 62.23 miles. He was a strong advocate of outdoor recreation and safe park access for all, gaining him admittance to the National Recreation and Park Association Hall of Fame.

Wirth studied and worked in horticulture in Zurich, London, and Paris, and also studied engineering. Initially a gardener for private estates, including the famous *Jardin des Plantes* in Paris, Theodore Wirth quickly became Construction Foreman for the New York Park Department, trimming trees in Central Park. An encounter with a police officer while Wirth was walking home, which culminated in Wirth being forced to retrace his steps to utilize the paths instead, solidified Wirth's rage against "Keep off the Grass" signs and his vow to do away with similar unwelcoming obstacles to the general public. After some "political upheaval," in his words, his position was eliminated (along with many others) and he became a freelance landscaper. Appointed superintendent of Parks in Hartford, Connecticut in 1896, where he designed the nation's first municipal public rose garden in 1905; his second would be built near Lake Harriet in Minneapolis in 1907.

Wirth came to Minneapolis in 1905 to accept the offer from Charles Loring of Superintendent, following the retirement of William Morse Berry. Initially reluctant, Wirth accepted the position with the condition that a home be built for him, and that he be given a chauffeur, since Wirth never learned to drive.

Wirth strongly supported Charles Loring's Street Tree Program, begun in 1888, and implemented the "Grand Rounds Boulevard System" somewhat after H.W.S. Cleveland's design of a continuous boulevard system encircling the city. Wirth's work was also influential for Minneapolis neighborhoods starting their "Playground and Neighborhood Park System," changing the flavor of city parks from that of "passive recreation" (walking and driving), to active recreation: bicycling, kite flying, ball playing, sliding on winter hills, and walking on the grass—which had previously been forbidden by the Park Board. Despite objections from traditionalists and some influential families, attendance at these newly-inviting city parks soared from 93,600 in 1907 to 250,000 in 1908, to 7 million prior to World War II, making the Minneapolis Park System "the envy of the rest of the country." Wirth also led the first hike of the Minneapolis Municipal Hiking Club (Minnehikers) in 1919. Hailed as a visionary and a risk-taking idealist, Wirth was survived by his wife and sons—two of which, Conrad ("Connie") and Walter L., along with a grandson, Theodore J. ("Ted"), also became architects, bequeathing three generations of landscape architects and the Wirth Environmental Award.

Description of the Collection

Original letterpress copies of Wirth's correspondence, 1899-1907. Includes correspondence to Charles Loring (1905-06) and to Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. (1904). Also includes biographical profiles, articles, and clippings. Also included is correspondence from his grandson, Theodore "Ted" J. Wirth.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library

Controlled Access Headings

Personal Name(s)

- Wirth, Theodore J., 1927-2009

Subject(s)

- Landscape architects -- United States.
 - Parks -- Minnesota -- Minneapolis.
-

Index to Letterpress Correspondence

Corporate Name(s)

- American Panoramic View Company, June 4, 1903 Page 32

- Bayersdorfer & Co., October 24, 1902 Page 31A
- Breitmeyer & Sons, John, January 5, 1904 Page 126
- [I[usfe?]] & Admiral, December 11, 1909 (?) Page 5A
- Meehan and Sons, April 16, 1903 Page 14
- Meyers and Co., December 23, 1900 Page 15A
- New Haven County Horticultural Society, October 7, 1903 Page 84
- Olmsted Brothers, December 11, 1909 Page 3A
- Olmsted Brothers, October 18, 1905 Page 238
- Olmsted Brothers, September 10, 1903 Page 61
- Olmsted Brothers, September 29, 1903 Page 65
- Reck & Son, John, October 19, 1903 Page 93
- Rice Automatic Sprayer Co., January 14, 1904 Page 128
- Society for Savings, February 20, 1906 Page 277
- Whittier & Co., W.B., May 12, 1903 Page 24

Genre(s)

- Bulletin, (Road) N.E.A.P.S., February 17, 1904 Page 136
- Circular Letter about Vilmorin Memorial Fund Page 164
- Circular Letter Asking for Information Page 155
- Circular Letter regarding Birds, January 5, 1904 Page 127
- Plants to be Procured Page 165
- Pruning of trees and shrubs Page 18A
- Public Rose Garden, Theo. Wirth Page 178
- Report for Connecticut State Vice-President, August 2, 1904 Page 158
- Road Bulletin (contribution for), February 17, 1904 Page 136
- Roundhouse Site Alliance (Collections) Page 175
- Specifications for Hartford Club Page 75

Personal Name(s)

- Altlick, H.M., June 28, 1906 Page 305
- Amrhyn, Gustave X., January 23, 1903 Page 42A
- Amrhyn, Gustave X., October 21, 1905 Page 95
- Amrhyn, Gustave X., October 5, 1903 Page 85
- Amrhyn, Gustave X., September 23, 1903 Page 63
- Appledorn, H.H., June 19, 1903 Page 36
- Baker, Dr. Frank, February 17, 1906 Page 273
- Barron, E., Editor, March 17, 1904 Page 146
- Baugher, E.A., June 13, 1903 Page 33
- Baugher, E.A., May 12, 1903 Page 21
- Beetz, Wilhelm, Vien, Austra, February 7, 1906 Page 258

- Beetz, Wilhelm, Vien, Austra, June 13, 1905 Page 215
- Beetz, Wilhelm, Vien, Austra, March 14, 1905 Page 198
- Beetz, Wilhelm, Vien, Austra, March 22, 1906 Page 295
- Beetz, Wilhelm, Vien, Austra, May 19, 1905 Page 210
- Beetz, Wilhelm, Vien, Austra, October 22, 1905 Page 240
- Beetz, Wilhelm, Vien, Austra, September 7, 1905 Page 229
- Boddington, A.T., January 3, 1905 Page 171
- Breitmeyer, Phillip, President, December 1, 1904 Page 167
- Breitmeyer, Phillip, President, January 5, 1904 Page 124
- Brown, George, March 10, 1906 Page 280
- Buths, Joseph, December 2, 1902 Page 41A
- Clark, F. Lewis, April 2, 1906 Page 295A
- Cowles, Anna Roosevelt, February 18, 1903 page 47A
- Cowles, Anna Roosevelt, February 25, 1903 Page 1
- Cowles, Anna Roosevelt, May 12, 1903 Page 22
- Crawford, Norman Mc. D., April 21, 1903 Page 16
- Cumming, Alexander, Secretary, Hartford Florist Club, April 12, 1906 Page 297
- Dawson, April 12, 1900 Page 14A
- Dawson, Jackson F., March 17, 1904 Page 148
- Driggs, A.W., June 13, 1903 Page 35
- Duncan, J.W., February 28, 1903 Page 6
- Duncan, J.W., March 16, 1905 Page 202
- Earle, Horatio S., Detroit, Mich., March 14, 1904 Page 142
- Egertson, Wm. S., December 6, 1904 Page 169
- Ell[s]worth, L.S., July 13, 1903 Page 45
- Ellsworth, L.S., September 10, 1903 Page 62
- Ellsworth, L.S., September 30, 1903 Page 66
- Ellsworth, L.S., September 5, 1903 Page 52
- Ensign, Joseph R., May 19, 1903 Page 26
- Ferguson, Henry (Mrs.), June 15, 1904 Page 153
- Frey, Alois, September 9, 1904 Page 165
- Frey, Alois, September 9, 1904 Page 164
- Gallagher, Percival, January 30, 1905 Page 174
- Graves, Edwin Dwight, May 27, 1903 Page 28
- Gross, Charles E., April 1, 1905 Page 206A
- Harrington, H.E. April 10, 1900(?) Page 10A
- Hartford Club, October 5, 1903 Page 74
- Heiss, J.F., March 15, 1906 Page 292
- Hillyer, Appleton, R. (Mrs.), March 9, 1903 Page 8
- Hubbard, Walter, Meriden, Conn., June 1, 1903 Page 29
- Hubbard, Walter, Meriden, Conn. August 25, 1903 Page 51
- Hyde, E. Henry, Jr., October 19, 1903 Page 92
- Jackson, J. Frederick, February 20, 1906 Page 276
- James, F.G., February 12, 1906 Page 268
- Jeffers, George B. (Mrs.), Scullville, NJ, March 13, 1905 Page 197

- Jensen, Jens, June 1, 1906 Page 302
- Judd, Theo. H., July 19, 1904 Page 155
- Kasting, William F., February 12, 1906 Page 269
- Kasting, William F., February 28, 1906 Page 278
- Kasting, William F., March 16, 1906 Page 290
- Kelsey, Fred'k W., March 16, 1904 Page 143
- Kelsey, Harlan P., April 16, 1903 Page 11
- Kinsey, Samuel A., May 9, 1906 Page 298
- Koehler, Hans J., December 1, 1904 Page 168
- Koehler, Hans J., March 16, 1904 Page 144
- Lindberg, M.P., March 15, 1906 Page 289
- Lines, W.S., March 27, 1905 Page 205
- Loring, Charles M., August 3, 1906 Page 306
- Loring, Charles M., July 4, 1905 Page 219
- Loring, Charles M., November 15, 1905 Page 252
- Loring, Charles M., November 9, 1905 Page 247
- Loring, Charles M., October 18, 1905 Page 235
- Loring, Charles M., September 12, 1905 Page 230
- Loring, Charles M., September 5, 1905 Page 227A
- Love, Wm. DeLoss, February 9, 1906 Page 259
- Maloney, John, January 30, 1903 Page 45A
- Manda, W.A., February 18, 1903 Page 50A
- McCall, John A., April 27, 1903 Page 17
- Merian, A.M., February 17, 1904 Page 134
- Morgan, E.D., February 1, 1900 Page 8A
- Morse, J.H., December 16, 1903 Page 106
- Munson, John, March 13, 1906 Page 283
- Munson, John, March 13, 1906 Page 282
- Nussbaumer, Fred, May 14, 1906 Page 301
- Olmsted, Jr., Frederick Law (Prof.), January 1, 1903 Page 117
- Olmsted, Jr., Frederick Law (Prof.), January 1, 1904 Page 118
- Olmsted, Jr., Frederick Law (Prof.), May 14, 1904 Page 149
- Orguelt[?], G.F., April 1, 1909 Page 7A
- Osborne, Geo. S., July 22, 1903 Page 46
- Pache, Henri, March 26, 1900 Page 13A
- Parker, G.A., February 26, 1903 Page 3
- Parsons, S. (Jr.), January 15, 1900 Page 5AA
- Pettigrew, J.A., February 13, 1906 Page 271
- Pettigrew, J.A., March 15, 1905 Page 201
- Pettigrew, J.A., November 4, 1902 Page 32A
- Ridgway, J.A., November 9, 1905 Page 244
- Robinson, Chas. M., March 11, 1903 Page 9
- Ruedlinger, C.N., November 13, 1903 Page 96
- Schutz, W.S., February 28, 1903 Page 7
- Schutz, W.S., October 19, 1903 Page 87

- Schutz, Walter, February 12, 1905 Page 267
- Seliger, Mrs. W., March 17, 1904 Page 147
- Shady Hill Nursery Co., May 12, 1903 Page 25
- Simmen [?], Robert, January 22, 1904 Page 130
- Skinner, W.C., November 30, 1903 Page 99
- Skinner, W.C., September 30, 1903 Page 68
- Smith, Constant, March 12, 1900 Page 12A
- Smith, F.R., President, September 12, 1905 Page 231
- Spear, D.A., June 23, 1903 Page 43
- Sperry, Lewis, November 21, 1902 Page 36A
- Sternberg, A.C., May 12, 1903 Page 19
- Stewart, Wm. J., December 31, 1903 Page 115
- Stewart, Wm. J., February 29, 1903 Page 5
- Stewart, Wm. J., January 14, 1904 Page 129
- Stewart, Wm. J., January 5, 1904 Page 125
- Stewart, Wm. J., November 19, 1902 Page 34A
- Stewart, Wm. J., October 19, 1903 Page 94
- Tainber, H.E., October 3, 1902 Page 39A
- Thompson, Harry C., Winnipeg, June 11, 1904 Page 151
- Thompson, R.W., Secretary, May 4, 1903 Page 18
- Todd, F.G., December 10, 1903 Page 105
- Todd, F.G., December 5, 1903 Page 104
- Todd, F.G., June 11, 1904 Page 150
- Traendly, Geo., February 27, 1903 Page 4
- Trimpy, M., December 19, 1900 Page 16A
- Vaill, J.H., July 6, 1903 Page 44
- Vanicel, V.A., April 7, 1903 Page 10
- Vaughan, J.C., Chairman, June 8, 1906 Page 303
- Vaughan, J.C., Chairman, March 15, 1906 Page 287
- Vaughan, J.C., President, S.A.F.O.H., May 27, 1905 Page 212
- Vaughan, J.C., President, S.A.F.O.H., October 17, 1905 Page 233
- Vaughan, J.C., September 8, 1904 Page 163
- Warder, R.H., Secretary, August 7, 1903 Page 47
- Warder, R.H., Secretary, November 19, 1903 Page 97
- Waterman, Edgar F., January 2, 1904 Page 123
- Waugh, F.A., Amherst, Mass., February 20, 1905 Page 176
- White, A.L., January 29, 1906 Page 256
- Whittier, Wm., November 4, 1909 Page 2A
- Wilcox, F.L., June 23, 1903 Page 40
- Williams, E.S., February 12, 1906 Page 265

Collection Inventory

	Box
Biographical sketch, clippings, handwritten index, photos, Parks and Recreation journal, press releases, holiday card, invitation, summaries, correspondence (from grandson), photos. 1906-2000	1
Photocopies of private correspondence from letterpress book, with page numbers and indexes. 1899-1907	2
Original letterpress correspondence, with page numbers 1899-1907	3