

Finding Aid to the Melvin A. Hildreth Papers

Hildreth, Melvin A., 1859-1944

Melvin A. Hildreth Papers, 1882-1944

8.8 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 654

[Biography](#)

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OVERVIEW

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BIOGRAPHY

Melvin A. Hildreth was born in Watertown, New York on October 27, 1859, the son of Curtis L. and Sara Ann (Luther) Hildreth. Educated in the public schools and Whitestown Seminary, he was certified as a teacher. He studied law in the office of Mullen and Griffen at Watertown and was admitted to the bar in 1883. Mr. Hildreth moved to Fargo, North Dakota in 1888 and in 1889 was married to Luella Davis of Booneville, New York.

Melvin Hildreth served in the Spanish-American War in which he was judge advocate of the First Manila Command, Philippines. Active in the National Guard, he was appointed inspector general of the North

Dakota unit from 1905 to 1908. He was city attorney of Fargo from 1892 to 1894 and again 1902 to 1904, and from 1914 to 1923 was a U.S. District Attorney. Mr. Hildreth was president of the trustees of the State Hospital at Jamestown for six years. He maintained an active law office in Fargo until 1943. He died January 13, 1944 in Fargo and was buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Mrs. Hildreth died June 13, 1937.

Mr. and Mrs. Hildreth were the parents of two children, Mildred and Melvin D. Hildreth. Mr. Hildreth was one of the founders of the North Dakota Democratic Party in 1889, and twice ran for a congressional seat. He gave the seconding speech in 1908 for William Jennings Bryan at the Democratic National Convention. Mr. Hildreth was a member of the Episcopal Church, a Master Mason, National Rifle Association, state and national bars, and a life member of the Spanish-American War Veterans. Mr. Hildreth gained a reputation throughout the state for his courtroom presentations. One of his more well-known cases was the prosecution of Kate Richards O'Hare in a war-time espionage case.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Hildreth collection consists of correspondence, attorney dockets, case files, financial records, and various subject files.

The bulk of the [Correspondence Series](#) is the letterpress collection of outgoing correspondence from 1893 to 1909 which is quite complete. This collection fully documents Mr. Hildreth's career for this time period. Almost all is typed thus facilitating reading. Only two folders of incoming correspondence, 1894, 1896, and 1923, to 1926, have been preserved and are very scattered. The State Bar Association of North Dakota correspondence includes both incoming and outgoing letters from 1932 to 1935 and is very complete. It deals mainly with the membership problems of the American Bar Association in North Dakota including its delinquent members and the national headquarters. The remainder of the correspondence, which is very complete, consists of Mr. Hildreth's official correspondence while serving as president of the State Bar Association of North Dakota from 1935 -1936. The attorney docket ledgers basically cover most Mr. Hildreth's career from 1884 to 1943 although there is overlapping of years. Most of the volumes include an index to the cases with all actions taken listed for each case.

Another major series is the [Court Case Papers Series](#). The major case papers include those of Katherine Rotenburg vs. Arthur Fisher, and Mr. and Mrs. Fisher (1926-1927) for which Mr. Hildreth represented the defendants; Myron R. Kent, whom he defended (1894), and the Movius Land and Loan Company, et. al. of Lidgerwood, North Dakota (1925-1927), whom he also defended. The papers of each case have been organized alphabetically by type of document and all are quite complete. Other cases include the transcripts for Henry von Bank (1918), Kate Richards O'Hare (1917), and A.D. Weeks, et. al. vs. Charles Hetland and City of Fargo (1924). The financial ledgers cover only the years 1891 to 1893 and 1904 to 1910. They are mainly business related although some do contain personal expenses.

The [Subject Files Series](#), arranged alphabetically, cover many aspects of Mr. Hildreth's career. It includes pamphlets on the 1924 Davis-Bryan presidential campaign, prohibition and other miscellaneous topics including a copy of *Townleyism Unmasked*. There are six law notebooks of his son Melvin from

while attending Columbia University from 1914 to 1916. The scrapbooks, composed of newspaper clippings and some pamphlets, deal primarily with political topics mainly national, New York and the Democratic Party. Other topics include North Dakota, especially early statehood, women's suffrage, and death of former President Ulysses S. Grant, and legal articles. Several of the scrapbooks have indexes. The newspaper clippings, arranged by subject, are not very extensive. There are also several of Mr. Hildreth's speeches and various State Bar Association of North Dakota publications.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

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2/1	Letterpress, Feb. 13, 1894 - July 14, 1894 (Index)
2/2	Letterpress, Dec. 11, 1894 - March 12, 1895 (Index)
2/3	Letterpress, Aug. 19, 1895 - Jan. 29, 1896 (Index)
2/4	Letterpress, Jan. 30, 1896 - June 6, 1896 (Index)
2a/1	Letterpress, June 6, 1896-November 13, 1896 (No Index)
3/1	Letterpress, Nov. 13-19, 1896, Jan 14-April 26, 1897 (No Index)
3/2	Letterpress, April 27, 1897 Nov. 27, 1897 (Index)
4/1	Letterpress, Nov. 24, 1897 Jan. 14, 1899 (Index)
4/2	Letterpress, Jan. 14, 1899 July 31, 1901 (Index)
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5/2	Letterpress, July 31, 1901 - May 29, 1902 (Index)
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6/2	Letterpress, April 6, 1903 - April 29, 1904 (Index)
7/1	Letterpress, April 29, 1904 - May 5, 1905 (Index)
7/2	Letterpress, May 5, 1905 - March 5, 1906 (Index)
8/1	Letterpress, March 6, 1906 - Sept. 26, 1906 (Index)
8/2	Letterpress, Sept. 26, 1906 - May 24, 1907 (Index)
9/1	Letterpress, May 25, 1907 - March 19, 1908 (Index)
9/2	Letterpress, March 19, 1908 - Nov. 18, 1908 (Index)
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State Bar Association of North Dakota Series

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- 11/3 1933
- 11/4 1935, Jan. - June
- 11/5 1935, July - Sept.

Presidential Correspondence—

- 11/6 1935, Oct. - Dec.
- 11/7 1936, January
- 11/8 1936, February
- 11/9 1936, March
- 11/10 1936, April
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- 11/12 1936, June
- 11/13 1936, July
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Attorney's Dockets Series

- 12/1 Case action ledger, Jan. 1, 1884 - Aug. 7, 1888 (including legal fees)
- 12/2 Case action ledger, April 10, 1889 - June 1893 (with legal fees and index)
- 12/3 Attorney's docket, Oct. 26, 1896 - May 26, 1909 (Index)
- 12/4 Attorney's docket, Jan. 16, 1903 - Jan. 2, 1943 (Index)
- 13/1 Attorney's docket, Jan. 4, 1897 - Feb. 4, 1908 (Index)
- 14/2 Attorney's docket, Dec. 22, 1906 - Feb. 14, 1929 (Index)

Court Cases Series

Katherine Rotenburg Vs. Arthur Fisher, Mrs. Arthur Fisher, Waldo Fisher_1926-1927

- 15/1 Affidavit for change of Judge
- 15/2 Affidavit of M.A. Hildreth
- 15/3 Bill of costs of defendants Arthur Fisher and Mrs. Arthur Fisher
- 15/4 Brief for defendant Waldo Fisher on motion for judgment or new trial
- 15/5 Correspondence, 1926-1927
- 15/6 List of jurors, statement of Violette O. Bannon
- 15/7 Memoranda for brief
- 15/8 Memoranda of evidence
- 15/9 Memorandum by Judge Buttz to grant new trial
- 15/10 Notes of Mr. Hildreth
- 15/11 Order for judgment
- 15/12 Order, Notice of trial, and Notice of retainer
- 15/13 Order to show cause
- 15/14 Requested instructions

- 15/15 Requests, 1-6
15/16 Summons, Complaint and Answer
- 15/17 Charles C. Francis et. al. vs. S.M. Francis, et. al., 1926-1930
- State of North Dakota vs. Myron R. Kent, 1894
- 15/18 Appeal
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15/23 Correspondence to Kent, 1894-1896
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16/2 Jury selection
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16/6 Swedenski confession
16/7 Testimony of Margaret Bingingheimer
16/8 Testimony of J.C. Kent
16/9 Testimony of Kent (William W. Pancoat)
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16/12 Supreme Court (North Dakota) action
16/13 Supreme Court (North Dakota) decision
16/14 Third Judicial District (Cass County Court)
- 17/1 Paul Martin estate, 1926
- Merchants National Bank of Saint Paul vs. Movius Land and Loan Company ,et. al.,
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- 17/2 Affidavit of W.S. Lauder, 1925
17/3 Affidavit of C.E. Movius, 1925
17/4 Affidavit of A. L. Parsons, 1925
17/5 Amended answer, and Amended answer by order of the Court
17/6 Answer to complaint, 1925
17/7 Articles of incorporation, 1923
17/8 Bill of particulars,*1926
17/9 Brief of Ermine Kilby, and Memoranda for Brief
17/10 Complaint and amended complaint
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17/13 Demand for Bill of Particulars, 1925-1926

- 17/14 Demurrer, 1925-1926
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- 17/19 Exhibits, 3, 11-13, 105, 131
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- 17/21 Findings of fact, Conclusions of law, and Order for judgment, 1926
- 17/22 Inventory of Movius Land and Loan Co. by A. L. Parsons receiver,
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- 17/23 List of creditors, bills receivable sold to First National Bank of Lidgerwood
- 17/24 Memorandum - Movius Land and Loan Company case
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- 18/6 Clara Henderson Roberts estate, 1935-1937

- 18/7 U. S. A. vs. Henry von Bank - Transcript of testimony, 1918

- 18/8 U. S. A. vs. Kate Richards O'Hare - Transcript of testimony, 1917

- 18/9 A. D. Weeks, et. al. vs. Charles Hetland and City of Fargo - transcript of the
evidence and statement of Case, 1924

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- 19/2 Account ledger, 1893
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- 20/1 Cash book (income - expenses), May 1, 1905 - April 29, 1909
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- 20/4 American Bar Association - List of persons dropped for delinquent dues -
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- 20/5 American Bar Association List, report, directory, 1932-1936
- 20/6 Army of the Philippines 1910 yearbook
- 20/7 Brief book and notes on law, 1888
- 20/8 J.W. Davis - Charles W. Bryan presidential Campaign, 1924 - Pamphlets
- 20/9 Eighteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution (Prohibition) - Pamphlets, 1926
- 20/10 *From Bernhardt to Hitler: The Origin of a Plan*, by Melvin D. Hildreth, 1940
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- 20/11 Equity, 1914-1915
- 21/1 Equity, 1914-1915
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22/14	"Unauthorized practice of the Law, bibliography," ca. 1933