

Finding Aid to the Martin O. Thompson Papers

Thompson, Martin O., 1882-1948

Martin O. Thompson Papers, 1906-1948

3 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 123

[Biography](#)

[Scope and Content](#)

[Box and Folder List](#)

OVERVIEW

Access: The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

Provenance: Donated by Alfred A. Thompson, 1953; and Mrs. Olaf E. Anderson, 1959 (Acc. 123 & 1002).

Property rights: The Institute for Regional Studies owns the property rights to this collection.

Copyrights: Copyrights to this collection are not held by the Institute for Regional Studies.

Citation: [Identification of item]. Martin O. Thompson Papers, MS 123, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

BIOGRAPHY

Martin O. Thompson was born March 5, 1882 at Paynesville, Minnesota, the son of Norwegian immigrants Andrew and Inger Thompson. In 1884 the family moved to Fort Ransom, North Dakota where his father homesteaded. He worked in various farms and attended school as money allowed. He attended for various periods Fargo College, University of St. Louis, University of Minnesota and the North Dakota Agricultural College. Deciding to study law, Mr. Thompson entered the University of North Dakota in 1906 from where he graduated in 1910 with a Bachelor of Law degree. That same year he began a law practice at La Moure, North Dakota, later moving to Lisbon in 1914. On May 15, 1915 he married Nettie B. Martin of Foxholm, Minnesota. They had two sons Robert and Alfred. In 1915 and

again in 1922 Mr. Thompson was elected States Attorney of Ransom County and in 1923 was elected County Judge of Ransom County which he held until his death. He also served as Clerk of Court from 1936 to 1940 and administrator for the Civil Works Administration in Ransom County.

Judge Thompson was very active in civic affairs. He was a member of the A.O.U.W. and I.O.O.F. lodges, Lisbon Park Board, past president of the State Historical Society, Ransom County Sportsman Club, State Horticulture Society as well as several garden societies. As well, he was active in wildlife conservation, bird banding, Boy Scouts, Nonpartisan League and the Republican Party. As a hobby he made a large number of wood carvings of various species of birds as well as bows and arrows and was an avid golfer. Mr. Thompson died June 3, 1948 at Fargo and was buried at Oakwood Cemetery in Lisbon. Mrs. Thompson later married Olaf E. Anderson of Fargo, N.D.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The **Martin O. Thompson Papers** have been organized into four series: Correspondence, Diaries, Financial records and Subject files.

The [Correspondence Series](#) is in two sections retaining Mr. Thompson's original order. It is basically personal and not related to his profession. The first section is arranged chronologically containing both incoming and outgoing correspondence covering the period 1906 to 1948. It is by no means complete with the 1930's containing the most material. The early portion into the 1920's contains mainly letters to the North Dakota Congressional delegation and concerning the Nonpartisan League, especially in Ransom County. Included is correspondence with William Langer, Gerald P. Nye, Henry Helgeson, John M. Baer, Asle F. Gronna and Robert LaFollette. The 1930's period concerns mainly wildlife issues, bird banding, as well as with government officials expressing his views on various issues. Included is much correspondence with O. A. Stevens of the North Dakota Agricultural College. The 1940's correspondence is again mainly with the North Dakota Congressional delegation along with various other concerns. Included are letters from William Langer, Gerald P. Nye, William Lemke and Milton R. Young. The other section of correspondence is arranged by subject and chronologically therein. Some subjects include charts, maps, forms and pamphlets as well. The Big Slough Game Refugee files concern a refuge established in 1931 near Englevale, N.D. and which Mr. Thompson took an active part in establishing. The correspondence consists of both incoming and outgoing letters and is most complete for the 1929 to 1931 period. Judge Thompson was on the Ransom County board of the federally sponsored Civil Works Administration for which his correspondence is quite complete for the years 1933 and 1934. Again, these files consist of both incoming and outgoing correspondence. Other subject areas include area flower shows, a highway beautification project near Lisbon, the Lisbon Horseshoe Club, Lisbon Park Board, North Dakota State Horticulture Society, Ransom County historic sites, Wildlife concerns, and son Robert. The Sand Hills correspondence (1934-1936) relates to his successful attempt in establishing a submarginal land project in the Sand Hills area. Another extensive section is his correspondence with son Alfred showing the close relationship of father and son. It gives good insights into Alfred's married life, marital problems and in the Army during World War II in which he was stationed at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, a German prisoner of war camp.

The next section deals with the separation of Alfred and his wife and the welfare and custody of their child. The files includes correspondence of and with his father, his lawyer Charles Bangert, and legal material including facts on the case, possible court questions and legal documents.

The [Diaries Series](#) of Judge Thompson are quite extensive, consisting of two types. First are the "Times Diaries" covering from 1914 to 1948 which deal mainly with the world wars and political topics. They are typed sheets recounting world events and, of greater value, Judge Thompson's views of people, governments and actions. Throughout, he maintains a very skeptical attitude of governmental policies. The other diaries are the more traditional type of daily entries in bound volumes. They cover the period 1937 to 1948 and are quite complete.

The [Financial Records Series](#) are related to the period he was a lawyer in Lisbon from 1914 to 1922 and seem reasonably complete.

The [Subject Files Series](#) are very extensive and cover a wide range of topics reflecting Judge Thompson's varied interests. Among the numerous files are newspaper clippings of the abstract of votes cast in various elections in Ransom County; a clipping and typed copies of poems of J.D. Allen, taxidermist; Judge Thompson's records of bird banding including various publications on the subject; North Dakota campaign literature and ballot for 1944; and various certificates including notary public appointments, Boy Scouts, and for being a member of County Selective Service Board. The Civil Works Administration material includes various notes, administrative forms and letters and statistics relating mainly to Ransom County. The dog's files contain several poems and stories; and the family history material consists of scattered obituaries and notes on family members. Included is reminiscence by Judge Thompson on his childhood pets. Judge Thompson participated in several debates at Fort Ransom for which he prepared typed notes and arguments.

The 1940 debate is on the power struggle in Europe and the 1947 debate was on giving aid to Greece and Turkey. The Hans Hendrickson (a brother to Judge Thompson's mother) estate papers include mostly correspondence and a detailed list of the heirs including in Norway. The Lisbon file contains only miscellaneous papers. Other Lisbon related material includes Superintendent Rahn's annual report to the Board of Education for 1929, and an expense and entry book for the 1933 flower show. The Nonpartisan League material includes meeting minutes of the Ransom County branch, a membership list, and some other form letters. The newspaper clippings have been organized by subject and include interesting items on the Civil Works Administration, horseshoe events, Lisbon and the Sand Hills. Other subjects include World War I and the 1940s.

The pamphlets include various national periodicals and articles dealing with the deteriorating situation in Europe in the late 1930s. The poetry, sayings file is evidently items which impressed Judge Thompson and which he copied. The proverb cards are a unique collection of blotters printed by Knight Printing of Fargo and containing sayings both comical and serious. The Ransom County material contains copies of historical items and on historic sites as well as World War II casualties. In 1948 there was a controversy in North Dakota over the wearing by nuns of their garb while teaching in public schools for which Judge Thompson retained several pamphlets on the issue both pro and con.

Other files include brochures and the 1916 platform of the National Socialist Party; letters, pamphlet and maps in connection with the shelterbelt project in 1935-1936; numerous notes for speeches given by Judge Thompson covering many topics although wildlife and nature predominate; papers related to his mother's estate; miscellaneous campaign speech notes of Judge Thompson; and other miscellaneous notes including for two trips, one into Minnesota and the other to Yellowstone and the Black Hills. The final, oversized material includes Judge Thompson's bird banding ledgers, and an album of pressed leaves, flowers and plant drawings.

SEPARATIONS RECORD

The following non-manuscript items were removed from the Martin O. Thompson Papers and have been sent to the section indicated.

Books (Library book collections, consult catalog for call number and location)

- *Your Choice; government by plunderers or producers*, by Walter Thomas Mills
- *What have North Dakota state industries done for you*, by Independent Voters Association
- *Clergymen endorse farmer government of North Dakota*
- *Let's Look at the Record, report to the people of North Dakota* by Governor John Moses, 1942
- *Voters guide*, by Republican - Democratic I.V.A. Joint Committee, 1920
- *In Memoriam: Alfred M. Kvello, June 9, 1941, Lisbon, N.D.*

Newspapers (Institute newspaper collection)

- *The Independent*, Fargo, N.D., March 27, 1919

Maps (Institute map collection)

- *Map of Ransom County, State of North Dakota*

Broadsides (Institute broadside collection)

- "Hear A. C. Townley, Republican candidate for U.S. Senate"
- "Mr. Butler, why did you get cold feet?"
- "Hear T.H. Thoresen, candidate for governor"
- "Coolidge - Daves Committee"
- "Nye's warning on scrap shipments to Japan was prophecy of events to come"
- "N. Dakota is Battle-ground in fight by the New Deal to purge Senator Nye"
- Political Rally, speakers Lydia Langer
- "Citizens Monitor, Oct. 6, 1937"
- "Shall the State Mill be sold - leased closed"
- "Does Ransom County need a \$136,000 court house"
- "To A.C. Townley, to Ray W. Craig"
- "Hear Minnie J. Neilson, State Supt. of Schools"

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder	Contents
1/1	Biographical material, and Finding aid
	Correspondence Series
1/2	1906, 1916-1917
1/3	1918-1919
1/4	1920
1/5	1921-1925
1/6	1926-1929
1/7	1930
1/8	1931
1/9	1932
1/10	1933
1/11	1934-1935
1/12	1936
1/13	1937-1938
1/14	1939-1942
1/15	1943-1944
1/16	1945
1/17	1946-1948
1/18	Undated and incomplete
1/19	Big Slough Game Refuge, 1929-1931
1/20	Big Slough Game Refuge, 1933-1935, 1942-1946
1/21	Big Slough Game Refuge - Miscellaneous, 1929-1931
1/22	Civil Works Administration, 1933
1/23	Civil Works Administration, 1934, January
1/24	Civil Works Administration, 1934 - Feb.- Dec.
2/1	Flower shows, 1930-1934, 1937, 1947
2/2	Highway Beautification project, 1934-1938, 1946-1947
2/3	Lisbon Horseshoe Club, 1921-1924, 1938
2/4	Lisbon Horseshoe Club - Miscellaneous material
2/5	Lisbon Park Board, 1926-1937, 1946-1948
2/6	North Dakota State Horticulture Society, 1929-1937
2/7	Ransom County historic sites, 1946-1948
2/8	Sand Hills Project, 1934-1936
2/9	Wildlife (hunting and fishing), 1929-1937, 1943-1948
2/10	Alfred-Thompson, 1931, 1937
2/11	Alfred Thompson, 1940-1942
2/12	Alfred Thompson, 1943
2/13	Alfred Thompson, 1944
2/14	Alfred Thompson, 1945
2/15	Alfred Thompson, 1946
2/16	Alfred Thompson, undated
3/1	Robert Thompson, 1947-1948
3/2	Separation correspondence, 1942 3 2
3/3	Separation correspondence, 1943 3
3/4	Separation correspondence, undated 4

3/5 Legal material 5
3/6 Legal documents, July 1942 - Feb. 1943 6

Diaries Series

3/7 1914-1917
3/8 1918
3/9 1919
3/10 1920
3/11 1921, 1923-1924
3/12 1937-1938
3/13 1939
3/14 1940
3/15 1941
3/16 1942
3/17 1943-1945
3/18 1946-1948
3/19 Notes of World War II
3/20 1937
3/21 1938-1939
4/1 1940
4/2 1941
4/3 1942
4/4 1943
4/5 1944
4/6 1945
5/1 1940
5/2 1947
5/3 1948

Financial Series

5/4 Business accounts, 1914-1916
5/5 Business accounts, 1914-1915
5/6 Business ledger, 1914-1918
5/7 Business ledger, 1918-1920 (Personal, 1914-1916)
6/1 Business ledger, 1920-1922 (Personal, 1925) 6 1
6/2 Personal expense ledger, 1916 2

Subject Files Series

6/3 Abstracts of votes cast in Ransom County, 1919-1922, 1928
6/4 J.D. Allen
6/5 Bird banding - Notes, 1929-1948
6/6 Bird banding - Bird Banding Notes, 1931-1939 (incomplete)
6/7 Bird banding - North Dakota Bird Notes, 1935-1938
6/8 Bird banding - Miscellaneous publications, 1930-1938
6/9 Cornelius Boyle estate, 1950, 1953
6/10 Campaign material, 1944
6/11 Certificates, 1910-1947
6/12 Civil Works Administration, 1933-1934

6/13 Dogs
6/14 Family history material
6/15 Fort Ransom debate, 1940, 1947
6/16 Hans Hendrickson estate, 1919-1939
6/17 Lisbon, N.D.
6/18 Lisbon Board of Education - Supt. Rahn's report, 1929
6/19 Lisbon Flower Show, 1933
6/20 Miscellaneous
6/21 National Nonpartisan League - Ransom County branch, 1918-1920, 1944-1945
Newspaper clippings-
7/1 Civil Works Administration
7/2 Horseshoe
7/3 Lisbon, N.D.
7/4 1940s
7/5 Sandhills
7/6 World War I
7/7 World War I and legal notices (booklet)
7/8 North Dakota legal blanks and court forms catalog, 1922
Pamphlets-
7/9 International events, 1935-1937
7/10 International events, 1939
7/11 Poetry, sayings, etc.
7/12 Proverb cards
7/13 Ransom County, N.D.
7/14 Religious garb issue, 1948
7/15 Socialist Party
7/16 Shelterbelt Project, 1935-1936
7/17 Speeches, 1920's-1930's
7/18 Speeches, 1940-1945
7/19 Speeches, undated
7/20 Alfred Thompson financial ledger, 1941 -1942
7/21 Alfred Thompson - Grade school papers
7/22 Inger Thompson estate, 1911, 1920-1939
7/23 Martin O. Thompson campaign material
7/24 Martin O. Thompson notes
7/25 Tree notes
7/26 Trip notes, 1923, 1930
8/1 Bird banding record
8/2 Bird banding day book
8/3 Leaf book - tree leaves and plant drawings