

Finding Aid to the Oscar H. Will Family Collection

Will, Oscar H., 1855-1917

Oscar H. Will Family Collection. 1887-1969

[Size (#)] linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 1026

[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 O.A. Stevens, 1960 (Acc. 1026); and NDSU Horticulture Dept., 1989 (Acc. 2252).

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

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Citation: [Identification of item]. Oscar H. Will Family Collection, MS 1026, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

BIOGRAPHY

Oscar H. Will was born at Pompey, New York on September 9, 1855, the son of Francis A. and Margaret (Barchie) Will. After completing school at the age of thirteen, Mr. Will worked at various area village stores and then entered his brother's nursery business at Fayetteville, New York. He was a traveling agent for the firm and also learned the florist trade. In 1881 Mr. Will came to Bismarck, Dakota to work for E.M. Fuller who was establishing a greenhouse there. A year later Mr. Will leased the business and introduced a line of seeds. This new interest was due to the tree claim law and developing a corn adapted to the areas growing season. Also, Mr. Will was able to homestead fifteen miles east of Bismarck. In

1882, he married Elvira Isabelle Bird of Bismarck. They had two children, George and Mabel. When the Bismarck boom ended in 1886-1887 Mr. Will concentrated on the seed and nursery business. He was especially interested in promoting more and better corn varieties. His seed company continued to expand, being known as Oscar H. Will & Co., and which was the first nursery in North Dakota. After Mr. Will's death on August 26, 1917 in Bismarck, his son George took over the business. Mr. Will was also president of the State Board of Agriculture. In 1923, he was inducted into the North Dakota Agricultural Hall of Fame at the North Dakota Agricultural College.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Oscar H. Will Family Collection consists of various biographical materials on Mr. Will and his son George, publications by George F. Will, and catalogs of Oscar H. Will & Co. The biographical material consists of various newspaper and magazine articles on Mr. Will. The material on his son George F. Will consists of newspaper clippings, obituary, and his writings on tree ring studies in North Dakota in which he was very interested.

The [Catalogs Series](#) is the great bulk of the collection. The company catalogs include for 1896, 1897, 1908 to 1959, and 1961 to 1969. They are standard seed and nursery catalogs and most of the covers from 1931 to 1959 have a Clell G. Gannon painting depicting scenes of Indians raising corn.

The [Price Lists Series](#) consists of Fall Planting Lists which are fairly incomplete from 1924 to 1934 and complete from 1940 to 1956; a Thanksgiving Day price list from 1939; and wholesale price lists from 1887 and 1896.

The [Subject Files Series](#) includes articles written by George F. Will, a booklet on cultural directions; and Christmas greeting cards.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder	Content
1/1	Biographical material, and Finding aid
	Catalogs Series
1/2	1896
1/3	1897
1/4	1908
1/5	1911
1/6	1912
1/7	1913
1/8	1914

1/9	1915
1/10	1916
1/11	1917
1/12	1918
1/13	1919
1/14	1920
1/15	1921
1/16	1922
1/17	1923
1/18	1924
1/19	1925
1/20	1926
1/21	1927
1/22	1928
1/23	1929
1/24	1930
1/25	1931
1/26	1932
1/27	1933
1/28	1934
1/29	1935
2/1	1936
2/2	1937
2/3	1938
2/4	1939
2/5	1940
2/6	1941
2/7	1942
2/8	1943
2/9	1944
2/10	1945
2/11	1946
2/12	1947
2/13	1948
2/14	1949
2/15	1950
2/16	1951
2/17	1952
2/18	1953
2/19	1954
2/20	1955
2/21	1956
2/22	1957
3/1	1958

3/2	1959
3/3	1961
3/4	1962
3/5	1963
3/6	1964
3/7	1965
3/8	1966
3/9	1967
3/10	1968
3/11	1969

Price lists Series

3/12	Christmas Price Lists (catalogs)
3/13	Fall Planting Lists (catalogs), 1924-1956 (incomplete)
3/14	Thanksgiving Day Price List, 1939
3/15	Wholesale price Lists, 1887 and 1896

Subject Files Series

3/16	Articles by George F. Will
3/17	Christmas greeting cards
3/18	Cultural directions