

Wilson, Albert Frederick, papers

Albert Frederick Wilson papers
circa 1840-1934

Title Statement

Wilson, Albert Frederick, papersAlbert Frederick Wilson papers MSS .16340

Author: Sharon Defibaugh and Abbie M. Morgan

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Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2026-03-05 17:54:48 +0000.

Language Usage: Description is written in: English, Latin script.

Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MSS .16340

Unit ID

[Archival Resource Key](#)

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Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/997

Unit Date

circa 1840-1934

Language

English

Extent

1.5 Cubic Feet 3 legal document boxes and 1 oversize folder

Condition Description

good

Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

This collection was given to the University of Virginia Special Collections Library by Dr. Timothy D. Wilson on July 27, 2017.

Processing Information

Occasionally there were empty envelopes present in the collection that we could not match with letters. Since they were not numerous, we have left them with the letters by the date stamped on the envelopes.

Biographical / Historical

The Wilson family papers include various letters and information about family members from the years 1840 until approximately 1934. These family members include Albert Sherwood Wilson (1818-1894), his grandson Albert Frederick Wilson (1883-1940), Ruth Danenhower (1887-1974) the wife of Albert Frederick Wilson, Mary A. Wilson the mother of Albert Frederick Wilson, as well as various other correspondents including Albert Frederick Wilson's sisters and children.

Albert Frederick studied at the University from 1902-1907. There he was very involved in extracurricular activities, including the Glee Club, a fraternity called Phi Sigma Kappa, as well as the "University of Virginia Magazine," becoming the editor in chief in 1907.

Albert Frederick Wilson taught at the School of Journalism at New York University. There he met Ruth Danenhower (1887-1974) when she was a student in his class, and they were married in 1916. They had three children, Sherwood, Geoffrey, and Sloan.

Content Description

The papers chiefly consist of letters Albert Frederick Wilson (1883-1940) sent to his mother in New Jersey while a student at the University of Virginia. There is also some correspondence from Wilson's father and

grandfather; family photographs; and unpublished manuscripts by Wilson.

Most of the letters are handwritten. But starting in 1906, typewritten letters become more frequent. The roles of African Americans at the University of Virginia are mentioned several times in his letters.

The rest of the papers include three published books written by Albert Frederick Wilson including 'Pok O' Moonshine', 'The Township Line', and 'Higher than the Wind can Blow', letters of correspondence between him and his wife, academic papers, testimonials about Albert Sherwood Wilson and his teaching positions, a copy of the April 1917 "University of Virginia Magazine," a scrapbook filled with reviews on Albert Frederick Wilson's book 'Pok O' Moonshine', photographs of the family, as well as various other documents which explore the lives of the Wilson family.

Separated Materials

Copies of published material transferred to Rare Books include three books by Wilson, "The Township Line" (1919), "Pok O' Moonshine" (1927) and "Higher Than the Wind Can Blow" (1934).

Keywords

University of Virginia -- Alumni

University of Virginia Magazine

University of Virginia--Students--Correspondence

University of Virginia -- Faculty

University of Virginia -- Department of English

African Americans -- Virginia

Content Warning

This material contains racist language or imagery. The purpose of this note is to give users the opportunity to decide whether they need or want to view these materials, or at least, to mentally or emotionally prepare themselves to view the materials. For archival materials, more specific information about these materials may be available in the finding aid.

Description of Subordinate Components

Albert Frederick Wilson to his mother, Mary A. Wilson, 2 folders

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

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Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/208913

Unit Date 1903-1904

Manuscripts [X031750661] 1 (box)

Container 1-2 (folder)

Extent 2 folder(s)

Scope and Contents

Albert Frederick Wilson's first letter describes his trip down to Virginia by train from New Jersey, with a stopover in Washington. He describes his first impressions of the University of Virginia, as well as including some disparaging remarks about the African American citizens of Charlottesville and the Southern drawl of Virginia's speakers (September 13, 1903). Wilson describes his boarding experience with a doctor's family, who he was surprised to discover were Baptists and "very religious (quite a novelty here)" (September 17, 1903). He also mentions that the cost of living was cheaper in Charlottesville, Virginia, than in Newark, New Jersey, where his family lived (September ?, 1903).

There are various references to him going to a Baptist church, including a black church in the area (September 14, 1903). This letter also mentions going to a YMCA located near the University of Virginia to see the list of available boarding houses where he found a boarding house on West Main Street run by a doctor's wife. He appears to have boarded first with the family of Dr. Jones and later with the family of Dr. Roy K. Flanagan, but it is unclear when he changed his boarding situation. He also describes Professor Noah Davis and how he managed to get into his class, normally not open to first years (September 14, 1903).

In a letter, October 11, 1903, Wilson describes his ride by horseback out to Monticello (October 11, 1903). He also gives his impressions of an African American religious revival held in Charlottesville, Virginia (December 7, 1903).

Scope and Contents

In 1904, A. Frederick was involved in various clubs at the University, and attended events such as the Peabody music recital by the Young Men's Christian Association. Wilson mentions hearing one of their guest speakers (January 25, 1904). In one letter, Albert expressed anger towards Dr. Kent because he sent him to the Chairman's office for not doing exercises from which he thought he was excused (November 4, 1904). This letter also mentions hearing the speech by a lawyer, Mr. Lee, who was representing a prisoner on trial for a murder in the area. He was also heavily involved in the Glee Club and his participation continued until graduation (November 18, 1904).

Wilson gave an itinerary for the Glee Club which was traveling to Staunton, Virginia, for a concert (November 18, 1904) and other places on a musical tour (November 21 and 25, 1904).

A. Frederick mentions several well known figures at the University of Virginia. This includes Edwin A. Alderman, the first president of the University of Virginia. He briefly mentions Alderman's selection as president (October 9, 1904). Another person he mentioned was Professor Kent, who was an English professor at the University. Frederick and Professor Kent worked together closely, and Kent is referenced in many of Wilson's letters while at the University.

A letter written around November 25, 1904, describes Wilson finding a drunken student in the snow who had fallen and broken his ankle. Wilson helped him back to his rooms at Dawson's Row .

Albert Frederick Wilson to his mother, Mary A. Wilson, 1905, 4 folders

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/208914

Unit Date 1905

Manuscripts [X031750661] 1 (box)

Container 3-6 (folder)

Extent 4 folder(s)

Scope and Contents

Wilson became a member of the Editorial Review Board (January 1-2, 1905). There are a lot of references in 1905 to a songbook A. Frederick had been trying to write and sell to groups or at events around grounds and he received the support of Dr. Kent for publishing the songbook (January 27, February 26, and November 3, 5, and 8, 1905).

Wilson mentions correcting the proof of his essay for publication and reading one of his poems before Dr. Kent, who liked the poem (April 7, 1905). Wilson accompanied the Glee Club on the train to Crozet to perform at the Miller School, a large preparatory school in the Blue Ridge Mountains (January 21, 1905).

Eventually A. Frederick Wilson became known as a writer in the University of Virginia community. Wilson

appeared twice in the "Corks and Curls," the annual yearbook at the University of Virginia which began in 1888. This yearbook published different student creative works, including poems, short stories and cartoons (May 16, 1905). He was also heavily involved with the editing staff of the "University of Virginia Magazine," as an Associate Editor.

He mentions that the Editor in Chief, William McCulley James, went missing temporarily from the University and he had to locate the proof of the magazine, correct it and send it back to the publishers in two days (May 23, 1905). James continued as Editor in Chief through the spring of 1906. A. Frederick Wilson became the Editor in Chief the fall of 1906. Wilson had high hopes of receiving one of the medals for his literary work, which he apparently did (June 10, 15, 1905).

Scope and Contents

A. Frederick was also involved with the Glee club in 1905. He described the preparation and surrounding events for the inauguration of President Alderman, which included a procession of students, alumni, visiting professors and university presidents, the Alderman family, and then the Governor and Alderman. Wilson mentions that he marched with the Glee Club in this procession (April 17, 1905).

A. Frederick's letters also mention various roles that African Americans filled on grounds during the early twentieth century and his own involvement with them this year. Some of these letters use offensive and racist language. Wilson mentions that an African American man delivered a surprise Valentine box from his folks (February 17, 1905). Wilson also searched for the music used in a popular but demeaning minstrel song that was also used in several other songs in Virginia, which he wanted to include in his songbook (March 10, 1905). He also mentions hiring an African American man to press his new suit before the inauguration of Alderman. When he did not return it to him by the morning of the inauguration, Wilson tracked him down in a panic and found him inebriated on a side street. After Wilson threatened physical violence, the older man finally located the clothes in a pool room unharmed (April 17, 1905).

Albert Frederick Wilson to his mother, Mary A. Wilson, 1906, 3 folders

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/208915

Unit Date 1906

Manuscripts [X031750662] 2 (box)

Container 1-3 (folder)

Extent 3 folder(s)

Scope and Contents

Letters from 1906 have additional mentions of the songbook that he was attempting to publish. In one, he sends the songbook to an editor in January and attempts to get it published; however, he refuses to put any money down for it. The editor tells him he must help pay for it, especially because it is a college book (January 19, 1906). He eventually does get it published and shipped to him with the title "Songs of the University of Virginia" (March 16, 1906; May 25, 27, 1906).

Wilson mentions that he gave President Alderman one of his songbooks, and Alderman praised it during a meeting of the entire student body where Alderman also discussed the new Carnegie pipe organ soon to be completed in Cabell Hall (October 30, 1906). He also used the songbook in the Glee Club events to promote its sale (November 2, 1906).

Scope and Contents

A. Frederick was involved in several other extracurricular activities this year. He attended baseball games against Yale which the University of Virginia won (April 19, 1906) and Princeton which game they lost (April 13, 1906). He was also still working with the "University of Virginia Magazine" editorial team and became Editor in Chief (June 10, 1906). He writes that the magazine got first place in college magazines for 1906 (November 2, 1906).

He considered getting involved with a fraternity called Alpha Delta Phi, which is still currently active at the University of Virginia. Apparently Dr. Kent had close connections to this fraternity and wished that A. Frederick would join it. The cost to be in the fraternity was twenty dollars at the time which he was unwilling or unable to pay (November 30, 1906).

A. Frederick Wilson refers to his work teaching at the University, probably his Teaching Assistant position with Dr. Kent (October 1, 1906). A. Frederick mentions that he was forced to pay a matriculation fee of ten dollars and a receipt for this has survived (October 18, 1906).

There is also a reference to an African American woman in one of his letters. The room he received when he returned to the University of Virginia had bedbugs in it, so they sent for the woman to come and clean it before he moved in (November 9, 1906).

Albert Frederick Wilson to his mother, Mary A. Wilson, 1907, 3 folders

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

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Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/208916

Unit Date 1907

Manuscripts [X031750662] 2 (box)

Container 4-6 (folder)

Extent 3 folder(s)

Scope and Contents

In 1907, A. Frederick was very active with the Glee Club. In one letter, he mentions that the Glee club got its name from an older club that had formed in the University of Virginia in 1888 (April 22, 1907). He writes that the Glee Club would be giving their first concert in February (January 27, 1907).

On March 11, 1907, he also mentions the itinerary for the upcoming Glee Club trip in April, chiefly in Virginia. Starting on April 4th, they were going to sing at Sweet Briar College, Lynchburg Woman's College and Roanoke where they would be performing in two places, a girl's school and a theatre. Then they went to Danville, Virginia, Washington, D.C. and finally, performed two concerts in Richmond and two in Norfolk (March 11, 1907).

In a letter on April 8th, he mentions the Glee club performed at a theater in Staunton, attended by students from Mary Baldwin College. There is a small newspaper clipping about the performance at Rawlins (April 8, 15, 1907).

Scope and Contents

A. Frederick continued his involvement in other extracurricular activities as well. A. Frederick became the Editor in Chief of the "University of Virginia Magazine" this year. He mentions that his publications in the magazine had brought him a good deal of fame on grounds (April 27, 1907).

A. Frederick became a member of the Phi Sigma Kappa fraternity (January 18, 1907) and wrote a song for one of the banquets they held (January 21, 1907). He also describes the "annual spring goating" or initiation activities of one of the law fraternities, including a mock court on the Rotunda steps (April 1, 1907).

A. Frederick mentions rumors that he was being considered for several honors for his work at the University of Virginia this year, including the Raven Society (January 15, 1907). He also mentions that he won the Edgar Allen Poe award for best short story for "The Tea Machine" (June 11, 1907).

Frederick wrote about a student being dismissed at the University of Virginia by the Honor Committee for breaking the honor code. The student appealed for and got a public trial by a jury of alumni (March 21, 1907). This letter furnishes some insight on the working of the honor system at the time. His letters have several mentions of the baseball season (May 4, 15, 1907).

In the summer of 1907, A. Frederick talks about his upcoming camping trip with the Flanagans and a group of friends in the mountains, at Sugar Hollow near Moorman's River, Albemarle County, Virginia (May 16, 1907; June 6, 11, 18, 1907).

Letters of Recommendation or Testimonials concerning Albert Sherwood Wilson, 2 folders

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/208917

Unit Date 1840-1889

Manuscripts [X031750663] 3 (box)

Container 1-2 (folder)

Extent 2 folder(s)

Scope and Contents

Prior to 1883, Albert Sherwood Wilson was the principal of a school in Bridgeport, Connecticut for over 20 years. In 1883, he taught first grade at Glen Cove Long Island, New York, where he eventually became principal. In one letter, June 28, 1889, he mentions Albert Barnum Wilson, who was the father of Albert Frederick Wilson. Albert Barnum Wilson was teaching in Newark, New Jersey and was a principal of one of the schools there during this time. Albert Sherwood Wilson had moved to Newark due to this and obtained a current certificate qualifying him to teach in New Jersey. Also present is a note of thanks to Wilson for his work as Chorister at his church.

Congratulatory Letters and Reviews about the work of Albert Frederick Wilson

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/208918

Unit Date 1927-1928

Mixed Materials [X031750663] 3 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Extent 1 folder(s)

Scope and Contents

Works include "Pok O' Moonshine" and "The Township Line."

Correspondence of Publishers to Albert Frederick Wilson

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/208919

Unit Date 1904-1906

Manuscripts [X031750663] 3 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Extent 1 folder(s)

Correspondence of Albert Frederick Wilson to his wife, Ruth Danenhower Wilson, and children

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/208920

Unit Date 1916-1931, undated

Manuscripts [X031750663] 3 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Extent 1 folder(s)

Scope and Contents

His children include Geoffrey, Sloan, and Sherwood.

Correspondence of Albert Frederick Wilson with Friends, Family and others

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/208921

Unit Date 1906-1927

Manuscripts [X031750663] 3 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Extent 1 folder(s)

James Melvin Lee to Albert Frederick Wilson

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/209173

Unit Date November 29, 1928?

Manuscripts OS Box M-36 (Flat_Box)

Container 1 [X031750664] (Oversize_Folder(Within_an_OSBox))

Extent 1 items

Processing Information

This letter was damaged by mold and torn. The Preservation team did some work on the letter to address the mold problem and it was placed in mylar to furnish added protection and support.

Scope and Contents

On printed stationery for the International Press Exhibition, American Committee, Lee's letter mentions a nice review for one of Wilson's books by Helen Parsons who covers the theater for "Long Island Life" and was an old student of theirs.

Personal and Family History Papers

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/208922

Unit Date circa 1846, 1916-1942

Mixed Materials [X031750663] 3 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Extent 1 folder(s)

Photographs

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/208923

Unit Date circa 1916-1932

Photographs [X031750663] 3 (box)

Container 8 (folder)

Extent 1 folder(s)

Scope and Contents

Photographs include images of A. Frederick Wilson when he was a professor at New York University's School of Journalism. One of these images includes him on a horse in New Canaan, Connecticut and another of him at his summer home in Ticonderoga, New York. There is also an image of multiple people on a ship in this folder. In 1932, Wilson and his family went to France for a year. H.G. Wells was allegedly on

their ship, and we have a photograph of the entire group of passengers, so presumably this included Wells as one of the people in this photograph.

Albert is also portrayed with his family circa 1930 in a location called Ormond Beach, Florida. This was the location of one of Ruth's homes and was a well-known house in Florida, once being owned by John D. Rockefeller.

Photographs (oversize)

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

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Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/209172

Unit Date circa 1916-1957

Photographs OS Box M-36 (Flat_Box)

Container 1 [X031750664] (Oversize_Folder(Within_an_OSBox))

Extent 1 folder(s)

Processing Information

Photographs are attached to large sheets, which were put inside large mylar L-sleeves for preservation. Each sheet has a typed description provided by the family, included in the oversize folder with the folders.

Scope and Contents

Sheet 1 contains many images of the family when they went to France for a year in 1932. There are also various photographs of A. Frederick Wilson taken in locations such as Rogers Rock, Lake George, New York, where he died in 1940; Daytona Beach, Florida, where Wilson and his family had moved; and other locations. There are also a few images of Wilson and his children when he was a professor.

Sheet 2 contains many images of A. Frederick Wilson when he was a professor. Many of these images are taken in various locations in New York as well as in Florida. There are images of his wife, Ruth, and his children including Geoffrey Wilson, Mary Sherwood Wilson and Sloan Wilson.

Sheet 3 contains images of Wilson's ancestors including his mother Mary, his great-grandfather, Robert Wilson, his great-aunt and uncle, Amelia Greene and George Greene, his father Albert Barnum Wilson, and others. Most of these were taken in Connecticut.

Sheet 4 contains various photographs of Wilson when he took a trip to France with his family in 1932.

Poetry - "Last Poems" typescript by Albert Frederick Wilson

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/209174

Unit Date undated

Manuscripts [X031750663] 3 (box)

Container 9 (folder)

Extent 1 folder(s)

Poetry by Albert Frederick Wilson

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/209175

Unit Date undated

Manuscripts [X031750663] 3 (box)

Container 10 (folder)

Extent 1 folder(s)

Printed Material - "A Decade of Magazine Poetry" by William Siegel in "The University of Virginia Magazine," which mentions the poetry of Wilson on page 340

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/209176

Unit Date 1917 April

Text [X031750663] 3 (box)

Container 11 (folder)

Extent 1 folder(s)

School Records of Albert Frederick Wilson

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/209177

Unit Date 1903-1907

Mixed Materials [X031750663] 3 (box)

Container 12 (folder)

Extent 1 folder(s)

Scope and Contents

Includes voting cards for editor of the "The University of Virginia Magazine," report cards, registration cards, lists of classes taken, and a copy of his graduation certificate.

Short Story "Monody" by Albert Frederick Wilson

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/209178

Unit Date undated

Manuscripts [X031750663] 3 (box)

Container 13 (folder)

Extent 1 folder(s)

Scrapbook, chiefly of "Pok O' Moonshine" reviews

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/209179

Unit Date 1927 January-1928 January

Mixed Materials [X031750663] 3 (box)

Container 14 (folder)

Extent 1 folder(s)