

**Guide to the Files
Of Lawrence University President Henry Merritt Wriston**

Collection number: LU-ARC012

University Archives
Seeley G. Mudd Library

Lawrence University
Appleton, Wisconsin

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Table of Contents

Descriptive Summary of the Collection	1
Important Information for Researchers	2
Biography	3
Collection Scope and Content Note.....	4
Collection Arrangement.....	4
Related Collections	4
Indexing Terms	5
Collection Contents	6

Descriptive Summary of the Collection

Title

Files of Lawrence University President Henry Merritt Wriston

Inclusive dates

1925-2006

Collection number

LU-ARC012

Collector

Office of the President, Lawrence University

Extent

4.6 linear feet (6 boxes)

Language of collection material

Collection is in English.

Repository

Lawrence University. Seeley G. Mudd Library. University Archives.
Appleton, Wisconsin 54911

Abstract

This collection is comprised of the papers that document the presidency of Henry Merritt Wriston, president of Lawrence University from 1925-1937. Materials include both incoming and outgoing correspondence of Wriston, speeches and statements he gave while at Lawrence University and publications he wrote during his presidency. Correspondence between Wriston and Lawrence after his presidency is also included. The inauguration of Wriston is documented through programs and correspondence from other colleges welcoming Wriston to the presidency. Biographical materials and a sound recording of Barbara Wriston, daughter of Henry Wriston, sharing memories of her father are also included.

Important Information for Researchers

Access

Collection is open for research.

Publication rights

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Preferred citation

Files of Lawrence University President Henry Merritt Wriston. LU-ARC012. University Archives, Seeley G. Mudd Library, Appleton, Wisconsin.

Acquisition information

The donor and date the collection was transferred to the University Archives are unknown. The compact disc recording was a gift of Barbara Wriston, 2006.

Processing history

Preliminary processing done prior to 2005, date and processor unknown. Processed by Julia Stringfellow, 2006.

Biography

Henry Merritt Wriston, president of Lawrence University from 1925-1937, was born in Laramie, Wyoming, in 1889. The son of a Massachusetts Methodist minister, he received both a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degree from Wesleyan University and received a doctorate in political science from Harvard University. He taught history at Wesleyan University and became the head of that history department.

In 1925, Wriston accepted the presidency at Lawrence University at the age of 36. During his tenure as president at Lawrence, Wriston worked to define the purpose of the college and raise its academic standards, revised the curriculum, expanded the library, and increased the number of faculty members. Wriston implemented a mandatory retirement policy at age 65 for faculty. In reshaping the curriculum, Wriston did away with courses he believed were incompatible with a liberal arts college, including bookkeeping, accounting, and business administration. Wriston also founded and became the first director of the Institute of Paper Chemistry, an institution of research and graduate study supported by the paper industry.

Wriston was the first Lawrence president who was not a Methodist minister and severed the ties the Methodist church had with Lawrence by removing the Board of Visitors, a group of Methodists, from the Board of Trustees. He allowed social activities on campus that had been frowned upon by the Methodists and even attended the first dances held on campus. Wriston also wrote a book, *The Nature of a Liberal College*, which was published in 1937. New buildings were also added to the campus during Wriston's time, including Alexander Gymnasium. Wriston was also a strong supporter of the Conservatory of Music at a time when the Board of Trustees wanted to abandon it. He was very proactive in building the college's art collection, and his goal was to build a center for the arts. This goal did not happen during his presidency due to the Great Depression that was occurring at the time. Wriston's work at Lawrence and establishment of standards for what a liberal arts college should be set a precedent that has been followed to the present.

Wriston left Lawrence in 1937 to become the President of Brown University, a position he held until 1955. He then became executive director, president, and chairman of the American Assembly from which he retired in 1965. He died on March 8, 1978, in New York, New York.

Collection Scope and Content Summary

This collection is comprised of the papers that document the presidency of Henry Merritt Wriston, president of Lawrence University from 1925-1937. Materials include both incoming and outgoing correspondence of Wriston, speeches and statements he gave while at Lawrence University and publications he wrote during his presidency. Correspondence between Wriston and Lawrence after his presidency is also included. The inauguration of Wriston is documented through programs and correspondence from other colleges welcoming Wriston to the presidency. Biographical materials and a sound recording of Barbara Wriston, daughter of Henry Wriston, sharing memories of her father are also included.

The correspondence arranged chronologically consists of letters sent to Wriston and Wriston's reply to the sender of the letter. Letters are from other colleges and presidents of other colleges, parents of current and prospective students, and committees and organizations of which Wriston was a part. The correspondence covers a variety of topics, including programs at Lawrence, speeches and public appearances of Wriston's, new buildings at Lawrence, including Alexander Gymnasium, and reports on buildings such as the Carnegie Library. Correspondence also includes invitations for Wriston to attend public events, and in some cases, serve as the speaker of the event.

Correspondence between art exhibitors and Wriston discusses paintings and catalogues, and exhibits held at other institutions. Wriston also discusses the purchase of pieces of art to add to Lawrence's art collection and discusses the importance of stimulating the interest of art at Lawrence. Wriston also discusses Lawrence joining art organizations throughout the country and also arranges for art exhibits to be brought to Lawrence from off-campus organizations.

Collection Arrangement

The collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material. General correspondence is arranged chronologically. Correspondence with organizations and people that resulted in numerous letters between Wriston and the organization is arranged alphabetically.

Related Collections

The following collections in University Archives contain related materials:

- Lawrence University Vertical File Collection. LU-ARC004.
- Theodore Crane Collection of Henry Merritt Wriston Materials. LU-ARC015.
- Essays and Talks, 1916-1974. LB875.W7 A1.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Subjects

Association of American Colleges
Education, Higher.
Knight, Douglas M., 1921-2005
Lawrence University.
Methodist Church (U.S.). Board of Education.
Milwaukee-Downer College.
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (U.S.)
Smith, Thomas, Stevenson
Tarr, Curtis W., 1924-
Wriston, Henry Merritt, 1889- .

Genres and Forms of Materials

Clippings.
Letters.
Photographic prints.
Sound recordings.

Occupations

College presidents.
Teacher.

Collection Contents

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Box : Folder</u>
Biographical materials and photographs, 1925-1991	1 : 1
Compact disc recording, Barbara Wriston shares memories of her father, 2006	Box AV-1 : LU-ARC01
Correspondence, incoming and outgoing	1 : 2 - 4 : 51
1925	1 : 2 - 1 : 8
June	1 : 2
July	1 : 3
August	1 : 4
September	1 : 5
October	1 : 6
November	1 : 7
December	1 : 8
1926	1 : 9 - 1 : 20
January	1 : 9
February	1 : 10
March	1 : 11
April	1 : 12
May	1 : 13
June	1 : 14
July	1 : 15
August	1 : 16
September	1 : 17
October	1 : 18
November	1 : 19
December	1 : 20
1927	1 : 21 - 1 : 32
January	1 : 21
February	1 : 22
March	1 : 23
April	1 : 24
May	1 : 25
June	1 : 26
July	1 : 27
August	1 : 28
September	1 : 29
October	1 : 30
November	1 : 31
December	1 : 32
1928	1 : 33 - 1 : 44
January	1 : 33
February	1 : 34
March	1 : 35

April	1 : 36
May	1 : 37
June	1 : 38
July	1 : 39
August	1 : 40
September	1 : 41
October	1 : 42
November	1 : 43
December	1 : 44
1929	1 : 45 - 1 : 56
January	1 : 45
February	1 : 46
March	1 : 47
April	1 : 48
May	1 : 49
June	1 : 50
July	1 : 51
August	1 : 52
September	1 : 53
October	1 : 54
November	1 : 55
December	1 : 56
1930	1 : 57 - 1 : 68
January	1 : 57
February	1 : 58
March	1 : 59
April	1 : 60
May	1 : 61
June	1 : 62
July	1 : 63
August	1 : 64
September	1 : 65
October	1 : 66
November	1 : 67
December	1 : 68
1931	1 : 69 - 1 : 80
January	1 : 69
February	1 : 70
March	1 : 71
April	1 : 72
May	1 : 73
June	1 : 74
July	1 : 75
August	1 : 76
September	1 : 77
October	1 : 78

November	1 : 79
December	1 : 80
1932	1 : 81 - 1 : 92
January	1 : 81
February	1 : 82
March	1 : 83
April	1 : 84
May	1 : 85
June	1 : 86
July	1 : 87
August	1 : 88
September	1 : 89
October	1 : 90
November	1 : 91
December	1 : 92
1933	1 : 93 - 1 : 104
January	1 : 93
February	1 : 94
March	1 : 95
April	1 : 96
May	1 : 97
June	1 : 98
July	1 : 99
August	1 : 100
September	1 : 101
October	1 : 102
November	1 : 103
December	1 : 104
1934	1 : 105 - 2 : 6
January	1 : 105
February	1 : 106
March	1 : 107
April	1 : 108
May	1 : 109
June	1 : 110
July	2 : 1
August	2 : 2
September	2 : 3
October	2 : 4
November	2 : 5
December	2 : 6
1935	2 : 7 - 2 : 18
January	2 : 7
February	2 : 8
March	2 : 9
April	2 : 10

May	2 : 11
June	2 : 12
July	2 : 13
August	2 : 14
September	2 : 15
October	2 : 16
November	2 : 17
December	2 : 18
1936	2 : 19 - 2 : 30
January	2 : 19
February	2 : 20
March	2 : 21
April	2 : 22
May	2 : 23
June	2 : 24
July	2 : 25
August	2 : 26
September	2 : 27
October	2 : 28
November	2 : 29
December	2 : 30
1937	2 : 31
1938-1971, Wriston's correspondence with Lawrence after he left to become president of Brown University	2 : 32
Albion College, 1926-1936. 2 folders. Correspondence discusses the Educational Association of the Methodist Episcopal Church of which the two schools were members and also covers other issues both colleges were facing at the time.	2 : 33 - 2 : 34
Alumni Reading Service of Lawrence College, 1929-1932	2 : 35
American College Bureau, 1934-1936	2 : 36
American Council of Education, 1926-1936	2 : 37
American Foundation, 1926-1933	2 : 38
Appleton Public Schools, 1933-1936	2 : 39
Appointments of new faculty, 1934-1936	2 : 40
Art collection acquisition, 1931-1935	2 : 41
Art collection rentals, 1931-1935	2 : 42
Art exhibits and memberships, 1927-1936	2 : 43
Ashe, W.F., Thilmany Pulp and Paper Company, 1926-1936	2 : 44
Association of American Colleges, 1929-1936. 10 folders.	2 : 45 - 2 : 54
Beloit College, 1925-1936	2 : 55
Boslough, A.W., 1928-1930	2 : 56
Brown, Rollo Walter, recipient of honorary degree in 1927, 1926-1933	2 : 57
Buck, Glen, recipient of honorary degree in 1929, 1929-1932	2 : 58
Carleton College, 1933-1936	2 : 59
Carnegie Corporation, 1925-1936	2 : 60

Carnegie Foundation of the Advancement of Teaching, 1932-1936	3 : 1
Carroll College, 1926-1936	3 : 2
Coe College, 1933-1936	3 : 3
Columbia University, 1934-1935	3 : 4
Cookson, Samuel, 1925-1931	3 : 5
Cornell College, 1933-1936	3 : 6
Council of Church Board of Education, 1935-1936	3 : 7
Curriculum at Lawrence University and other colleges, 1925-1932	3 : 8
DePauw University, 1935-1937	3 : 9
Development and fund raising at Lawrence University, 1933-1934	3 : 10
Evans, Horace James, donor of scientific apparatus and graduate of Lawrence 1879, 1928-1929	3 : 11
General Education Board, 1925-1934	3 : 12
Gifts to Lawrence, 1933-1937	3 : 13
Griffith, Albert, collector of Lincoln materials that were possibly donated to Lawrence, 1929-1934	3 : 14
Grinnell College, 1934-1935	3 : 15
Humphrey, Edward, regarding donation of photographs of the class of 1859, 1928-1929	3 : 16
Investments of Lawrence	3 : 17 - 3 : 27
First Trust and Savings Bank, 1929-1930	3 : 17
First Trust Company of Appleton, 1926-1933	3 : 18
General information, 1926-1931	3 : 19
Harris Trust and Savings Bank, 1930-1931	3 : 20
Kasten, Walter, Board of Trustees, treasurer, First Wisconsin National Bank, 1931-1934	3 : 21
MacFarlane, Henry, Lawrence graduate 1921, National Republic Company, 1929	3 : 22
Nash, Francis, Lawrence graduate 1904, E.E. MacCrone and Company, 1929-1931	3 : 23
Northern Bond and Mortgage Company, 1928-1929	3 : 24
Rasey, Lee, Lawrence graduate 1913, 1927-1932	3 : 25
White, Richard, Lawrence graduate 1913, First Investment Company, 1929-1931	3 : 26
W.M.L. Ross and Company, Incorporated, 1927-1932	3 : 27
Iowa Wesleyan College, 1933	3 : 28
Knox College, 1933-1936	3 : 29
Locke, Charles Edward, Methodist Episcopal Church bishop, 1925-1928	3 : 30
Matriculation Convocation, 1933	3 : 31
Memos between Wriston and Ralph Watts, business manager of Lawrence University, 1926-1936. 3 folders.	3 : 32 - 3 : 34
Methodist Church	3 : 35 - 3 : 45
Board of Directors, 1933-1934	3 : 35
Board of Education, 1925-1937. 4 folders.	3 : 36 - 3 : 39
Board of Education, Committee on the Utilization of the Survey, 1933	3 : 40
Board of Education, inspections of colleges, 1932-1934	3 : 41

Board of Education, survey, 1930	3 : 42
Board of Visitors members, 1933-1935	3 : 43
Conferences, 1934-1939	3 : 44
Sesquicentennial, 1932-1934	3 : 45
Midwest College conference, 1934-1937. 6 folders.	3 : 46 - 3 : 51
Milwaukee-Downer College, correspondence with president Lucia Briggs, 1926-1936	4 : 1
Milwaukee Public Schools, 1934-1936	4 : 2
National Collegiate Athletic Association, 1935-1936	4 : 3
National Interfraternity Conference, 1934-1936. 2 folders.	4 : 4 - 4 : 5
Nepco Tri-City Flying Service Incorporated, 1929-1930	4 : 6
North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, 1927- 1935. 3 folders.	4 : 7 - 4 : 9
North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, Athletics and Physical Education Committee, 1928-1932	4 : 10
Parents of Lawrence students, 1935	4 : 11
Presidents of Lawrence	4 : 12 - 4 : 14
Knight, Douglas, president from 1954-1963, 1955-1962	4 : 12
Smith, Thomas, president from 1969-1979, 1974-1978	4 : 13
Tarr, Curtis, president from 1963-1969, 1963-1969	4 : 14
Presidential portrait of Wriston fund, 1941-1969	4 : 15
Recommendations for Lawrence faculty and students, 1927-1931	4 : 16
Rhodes Scholarship Trust, 1926-1933	4 : 17
Ripon College, 1925-1936	4 : 18
Saint Norbert College, 1933-1938	4 : 19
Schneller, Frank, Lawrence graduate 1902, 1926-1932	4 : 20
Shattuck, S. Frank and Ruth, 1929-1933. S. Frank Shattuck was a Board of Trustee member at Lawrence from 1904-1910 and Ruth Harwood Shattuck was a Lawrence graduate of 1906.	4 : 21
Steele, Westbrook, 1928-1929	4 : 22
Student protest and peace march at Lawrence, 1936	4 : 23
Student publications	4 : 24 - 4 : 25
<i>Ariel</i> , 1934-1936	4 : 24
<i>Lawrentian</i> , 1933-1935	4 : 25
Students attending Lawrence and alumni, 1933-1937	4 : 26
Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America, 1933-1935	4 : 27
Telling, Elizabeth, regarding Colman bookplate, 1929	4 : 28
Thompson, Mary Dartt, 1928-1929	4 : 29
Titus, W.A., 1930	4 : 30
Tutorial on teaching International Relations at Lawrence, 1934-1936	4 : 31
United States Federal Emergency Relief Administration, 1933-1935	4 : 32
United States Office of Education, Department of the Interior, 1933-1936	4 : 33
United States Society, 1932-1934	4 : 34
University of Chicago, 1933-1936	4 : 35
University of Wisconsin, 1926-1936. 2 folders.	4 : 36 - 4 : 37

Weismiller, Luverne, secretary 1926-1931, 1927-1930	4 : 38
Weston, Arthur, Lawrence professor of Classics, correspondence discusses Lawrence course catalog and academic calendar, 1927-1936	4 : 39
Whiting, George, art museum building, 1930	4 : 40
Wisconsin Citizens' Committee on Unemployment, 1930-1931	4 : 41
Wisconsin Committee on Educational Programs for the Unemployed, 1930	4 : 42
Wisconsin Conference of Social Work, 1927-1936	4 : 43
Wisconsin Council of Education, Committee on Entrance Requirements, 1933-1934	4 : 44
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1936	4 : 45
Wisconsin Industrial Commission, 1934	4 : 46
Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, 1933	4 : 47
Wisconsin Teacher Training Council, Department of Public Instruction, 1929	4 : 48
Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.), 1925-1936. 3 folders.	4 : 49 - 4 : 51
Inauguration of Wriston as president, 1925	4 : 52 - 5 : 2
Correspondence, 1925	4 : 52
Newspaper clippings, 1925	4 : 53
Prayer and speeches, 1925	5 : 1
Programs and guestbook, 1925	5 : 2
Newspaper clippings, 1925-1988	5 : 3
Photographs, 1928-1971	5 : 4
Publications	5 : 5 - 5 : 17
Bibliography of Wriston's published works, 1916-1956	5 : 5
Admissions brochure text, "Choosing a college," 1929	5 : 6
<i>Appleton Post Crescent</i> articles, 1930-1931	5 : 7
Appleton Teachers' Association Messenger article, 1932	5 : 8
<i>Educational News from the Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church</i> , 1927	5 : 9
"Executive agents in American foreign relations," <i>Albert Shaw Lectures on Diplomatic History</i> , 1929	5 : 10
"A genuine voyage of discovery," <i>Journal of Adult Education</i> , 1932	5 : 11
"National political platforms," <i>Appleton Post Crescent</i> , 1928	5 : 12
<i>Nature of a Liberal Arts College</i> , correspondence with the publisher of the book and with colleges receiving the book, 1937-1938	5 : 13
<i>Nature of a Liberal Arts College</i> , correspondence requesting permission to cite the book, 1951-1966	5 : 14
"Pictures for students to live with," <i>Association of American Colleges Bulletin</i> , 1931	5 : 15
"The small college," <i>The Classmate</i> , 1928	5 : 16
"Your vocation," 1935	5 : 17
Selection of Wriston as president, correspondence and guidelines, 1921- 1925	5 : 18

Speeches	5 : 19 - 6 : 12
Interview transcript in which Wriston discusses his presidency, 1967	5 : 19
Dates and titles, 1914-1936	5 : 20
“Economics versus politics,” 1936	5 : 21
“Educational ideals in Lawrence,” 1928	6 : 1
Fraternity quadrangle dedication, 1941	6 : 2
“Lawrence College-a survey and outlook,” 1935	6 : 3
Lawrence University’s 125 th anniversary celebration, 1972	6 : 4
“Lawrence versus colleges x, y, and z,” 1935	6 : 5
“Liberal arts college,” 1934	6 : 6
National Interfraternity Conference, 1935	6 : 7
“National survey of secondary education,” 1933	6 : 8
“Place of the library in the modern age,” 1936	6 : 9
“Responsibility of a college president in a changing physical education program,” 1931	6 : 10
“Training technical men at the institute,” 1932	6 : 11
“Which way independence? ,” speech given at Milwaukee-Downer College, 1952	6 : 12
Statements	6 : 13 - 6 : 29
“Effect of the new statement of policy of the North Central Association upon faculty and student scholarship,” 1934	6 : 13
Faculty advising, circa 1925-circa 1937	6 : 14
Homecoming, 1935	6 : 15
“Honorable Crighton,” foreword, 1926	6 : 16
Languages in the Lawrence curriculum, circa 1925-circa 1937	6 : 17
Lawrence curriculum, circa 1925-circa 1937	6 : 18
Made to the <i>Ariel</i> , 1928-1931	6 : 19
Made to the Board of Trustees, circa 1925-circa 1937	6 : 20
Marinette High School commencement, 1933	6 : 21
Regulations regarding automobiles on campus, circa 1925-circa 1937	6 : 22
State of colleges, circa 1925-circa 1937	6 : 23
Self help at Lawrence, circa 1925-circa 1937	6 : 24
Statement of principles upon which the proposed new curriculum was based, circa 1925-circa 1937	6 : 25
Student discipline, circa 1925-circa 1937	6 : 26
Student handbook, circa 1925-circa 1937	6 : 27
Word of welcome to the Sigma Alpha Iota national convention meeting at Lawrence, circa 1925-circa 1937	6 : 28
Word of welcome to the visiting basketball tournament, circa 1925-circa 1937	6 : 29