

February 2014

W88-0101. Wichers, Willard C. (1909-1991). Papers, 1909-1979. 2.75 linear ft.

Western Theological Seminary

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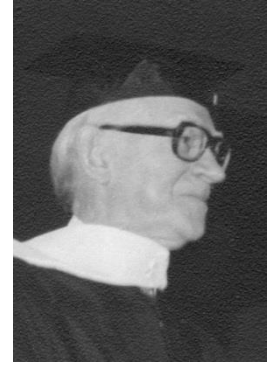
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February 17, 2014.

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W88-0101. Wichers, Willard C. (1909-1991).
Papers, 1909-1979. 2.75 linear ft.



Abstract

Hope College class of 1931. Collection consists primarily of papers on his involvement in the Reformed Church in America (RCA), the Board of Theological Education, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and Western Theological Seminary. In addition to correspondence, minutes, reports, and financial information on the latter organizations, this collection also contains information on Walter Gates, Robert J. Kleiman, Henry Kleinheksel, Herman J. Ridder, Rev. Arie R. Brouwer, and Rev. Vernon L. Dethmers.

Accession No: W88-0101
Provenance: Willard C. Wichers
Donor: Willard C. Wichers
Processed by: Ena Brooks, October 1998

Biography

Willard C. Wichers was born in Zeeland on March 20, 1909, to Henry Wichers and Mamie Vrieling Wichers. He attended the public schools there and then went on to Hope College, where he graduated from in 1931, and the University of Michigan. He was married to Nell Elizabeth Van Haitsma in 1937, and they had two daughters, Elizabeth and Janet.

Wichers was a chemistry major at Hope College and began his career by working as a night chemist at the sugar beet factory in Holland. On the side, he set up a small public relations business, and within a few months had attracted the attention of the state directors of the Federal Writer's Project. Wichers was made the West Michigan supervisor of the Historical Records Survey Project. He felt very strongly about the importance of history and was affiliated with many organizations dealing with historical preservation throughout his life. He was a member of the Holland Historical Cultural Commission, the Holland Area Historical Advisory Commission, the Michigan Historic Preservation Review Board, the Historical Society of Michigan, the Netherlands Pioneer and Historical Foundation, and a commissioner of the Dutch-American Historical Commission. He was also responsible for founding the Netherlands Museum, which is now the Holland Museum, in 1937.

Wichers became involved with the Netherlands government in 1941 when Princess Juliana visited Hope College. He was persuaded to organize and publicize the event. The Netherlands saw the need to establish an information center in the United States to promote trade and travel between the two countries and Wichers spent a great deal of time in Washington, D.C. and New York helping to set up the service. By 1942, this resulted in the establishment of a Midwestern Office of the Netherlands Information Service (NIS) in Holland. He held that position until his retirement in 1974 when the Midwestern Office was closed. After the closure, he continued on as Consul for Press and Cultural Affairs. During his time as the NIS director, he was responsible for twenty states, from New York to Colorado and from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. Much of his time was spent developing markets for Dutch goods in the United States and for American enterprises and products in the Netherlands.

Wichers was continuously involved in activities outside of the Netherlands Information Service. For instance, he was a major force in getting the De Zwaan windmill for Holland's Windmill Island. He also used his considerable influence in a successful attempt to keep the red lighthouse in Holland Harbor. Wichers was actively involved with managing Tulip Time for many years and served on Holland's Centennial Commission in 1947. He also gave his time to the Reformed Church of America, the Governor's Commission for Refugees and Displaced Persons, Grand Valley State College's Advisory Council, board of directors of the West Shore Symphony, and the Holland Council for the Arts, as well as many other worthy organizations. Wichers served as secretary of the Hope College Board of Trustees for many years.

Wichers received many honors at local, national, and international levels. He was made a knight and officer of the Order of Oranje-Nassau in recognition of his services to the Netherlands. Rotary International bestowed its Service Above Self Award upon him. Countless other honors have been awarded to him by other organizations as well.

Willard C. Wichers died on May 19, 1991, leaving behind a lifetime of accomplishments. He had been labeled "Mr. Holland" as a result of his outstanding dedication, not only to the Holland community, but also to the Netherlands.

Scope and Content

This collection consists primarily of papers on his involvement in the Reformed Church in American (RCA), the Board of Theological Education, the New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and Western Theological Seminary. In addition to correspondence, minutes, reports, and financial information on the latter organizations, this collection also contains information on Walter Gates, Robert J. Kleiman, Henry Kleinheksel, Herman J. Ridder, Rev. Arie R. Brouwer, and Rev. Vernon L. Dethmers.

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