Accession # *86 M 12 (37M95; 44M87; 48M34) Location

Title WILLIAM J. WILGUS. PAPERS.

Approximate inclusive dates 1895-1947

Date of receipt 1936-1950

Received from William J. Wilgus

Gertrude B. Wilgus (wife)

Volume on arrival unknown

Number of boxes (after reboxing) 77 RC; 20 AB; 4 FB; 1 FB oversize; 1 slipcase (115 l.f.)

Condition varies. Many items in bound volumes with deteriorating bindings, boards often missing. Many items badly need foldering. Nearly everything is very dirty.

Restrictions see memo

Description see attached sheets

Special Formats ☑Photographs ☑Maps ☐Audio Tapes ☐Films ☐Graphics

☐Artifacts ☐Machine-readable records ☐Other (list) books

Temporary catalog card added entries

see attached list

Accessioned by _______________________

Date __________________________

March 1986
William John Wilgus (1865-1949), prominent civil engineer, was born in Buffalo, New York. After high school he was privately tutored in engineering before accepting his first position as rodman and draughtsman for the Minnesota and Northwestern Railroad in 1885. Wilgus rose rapidly in his profession. In 1893 he began his association with the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad as assistant engineer on its Rome, Watertown and Ogdensburg line. By 1899 he was the railroad's chief engineer for construction and maintenance of way and in 1903 became vice-president in charge of construction. During these years he supervised the planning and construction of Buffalo Union Station, the Weehawken (N.J.) Terminal, the modern Grand Central Station and the electrification of the suburban lines leading into it. In 1907 Wilgus left the NYC & HRR to open his own consulting practice. He advised numerous railroad companies on construction and improvement projects and on the valuation of their holdings. In addition to his engagements with private corporations Wilgus worked on numerous projects for states and municipalities including several concerned with the improvement of passenger and freight transportation in the New York Metropolitan area. He was appointed chairman of the board of consulting engineers for the construction of the Holland Tunnel, construction engineer for the proposed Narrows Tunnel, and consultant to the New York Transit Commission and the Regional Plan of New York and its Environs. During World War I Wilgus was sent to France as a member of the Military Railway Commission to study the suitability of the French railroads for the transportation of troops and material. He became Director of Railways for the American Expeditionary Forces and later Deputy Director General of Transportation. After his retirement from private practice in 1930, Wilgus devoted much of his time to writing and research on military and civilian transportation issues while working in the public sector. From 1934-1935 he served as director of New York City's Works Division in charge of work relief projects and from 1940-1941 as advisor to the National Resources Planning Board. Wilgus was a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and president of its New York Chapter from 1920-1921. He won many awards for his war service and his achievements and publications in the engineering field. After his retirement he settled in Ascutney, Vermont and later Claremont, New Hampshire where he died in 1949.

The William Wilgus Papers contain the records of his professional activities as a civil engineer, 1895-1947. The collection is divided into six major subgroups: New York Central & Hudson River Railroad, 1895-1931; American Expeditionary Forces-Transportation Corps, 1915-1933; Private Consulting Practice, 1908-1930; Public Service Activities, 1933-1945; American Society of Civil Engineers, 1914-1930; and Writings, 1913-1947.

The papers relating to his employment by the New York Central & Hudson River Railroad are divided into three sections. The first two document the inception and creation of the new Grand Central Terminal and the change of motive power from steam to electricity on the terminal's main line approaches, 1902-1913. Section one concerns the history of Grand Central Station and contains materials collected by Wilgus in an effort to document this dramatic achievement. Included are Wilgus' correspondence, 1903-1931, regarding his role as chief engineer, his summation of the project, Grand Central Terminal In Perspective (1939) and the research notes and correspondence used in its preparation, a guide to his papers on this topic given to the New York Public Library, earlier histories of the construction from contemporary journal articles and a draft history prepared by the railroad, sets of correspondence and pictorial documents gathered by Wilgus, and commemorative brochures. The second section contains original records of the electric zone and Grand Central Terminal improvements. Among these papers are...
correspondence (particularly concerning underrunning the third rail and the Woodlawn wreck of 1907); engineering reports; negotiations, agreements, and joint committee minutes of the NYC & HRR and New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, 1903-1909; minutes of construction committee meetings, 1902-1906; reports to the Electric Traction Commission, 1903-1906; proposals, bids, cost estimates, contracts, and specifications for equipment and construction; printed material, photographs, maps, and a scrapbook of clippings. The third section concerns the rehabilitation and expansion of the NYC & HRR's other lines. Included are standard plans and specifications, bridge books, and masonry specifications for the Rome, Watertown and Ogdensburg Railroad; specifications and data on the Buffalo Union Station and Weehawken Terminal; annual track reports; condensed profiles; miscellaneous construction data, unit costs, bids, and specifications for various divisions of the railroad; photographs, a scrapbook of press clippings, and a scrapbook of rail passes issued to Wilgus.

Subgroup II contains records relating to Wilgus' military service during World War I as Director of Railways and Deputy Director General of Transportation in the Allied Expeditionary Forces, and later, as historian of the Transportation Corps. The subgroup is divided into four series: Correspondence, Writings and Translations by Wilgus, Writings by Others, and Source Materials. The correspondence relates to the recruitment of engineering officers, the development of the Transportation Corps and the military railway system in France, and the attempts of Wilgus and others to write the history of the events. Wilgus' writings include copies of his war diary, 1917-1919, Transporting the A.E.F. In Western Europe (1931) and manuscripts, typescripts, and published copies of articles on the transportation of American troops translated from the French by Wilgus. The series Writings by Others contains books and articles on military transportation during the war including an unpublished history of the Transportation Corps by J.W.D. Melvin. Finally, the Source Materials contain copies of significant correspondence, memoranda, reports, charts, statistics, maps, and other data made by Wilgus before leaving the service. Included also are his scrapbook of clippings about the Transportation Corps and signal corps photographs of troops, railroads, and supply depots in France.

Subgroup III contains the records of Wilgus' private consulting practice in New York City. His files are arranged by client or project in three sections: New York transportation; major railroad projects; and general client files. The files contain correspondence, engineering reports, drawings, blueprints, statistics, notes, photographs, copies of legislation, legal briefs, printed material, and scrapbooks of clippings. The New York section includes material regarding his work on the small car freight subway, 1908-09; the interterminal belt line, 1909; the subway situation, 1910-1919; New York/New Jersey Port of Authority, 1909-33; the Holland Tunnel, 1919-22; the Narrows Tunnel, 1921-22; the Regional Plan of New York and its Environ; and the Mayor's Committee on City Planning. Railroad companies which engaged Wilgus for inspections, valuations, litigation and other projects included the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad, Toledo, St. Louis and Western Railroad, Lehigh Valley Railroad and Coal Company, New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, Central Railroad Company of New Jersey, Fonda, Johnstown and Gloversville Railroad, and the Wabash Railroad. The records of his other engagements are arranged by case numbers which Wilgus assigned chronologically.

Subgroup IV, Public Service Activities, contains papers relating to Wilgus' attempts to have a Green Mountain Park and Parkway developed in Vermont, 1933-1936; his public opposition to a proposed ship canal in Florida, 1937-1941; his records as director of the Works Division of New York City's Emergency Relief Bureau, 1934-1935; and his report "Problems of National Defense" prepared while a consultant to the National Resources Planning Board, 1940-1941.
Subgroup V contains Wilgus' papers as a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, 1914-1930, and president of its New York Chapter, 1920-1921. Included are correspondence, meeting minutes, papers of the Committee on the Valuation of Public Utilities, and records of the United Engineering Society.

Subgroup VI, contains Wilgus' essays along with related research notes, correspondence, and printed material on three of his favorite topics, "The Railroad Problem," 1920-1942, "The Transportation Problem," 1913-1947, and "A Military Defect," 1936-1943 (issues of military reorganization, transportation, and war preparedness). Several of his essays on other engineering topics are also present.

In addition to material described above, the Wilgus Papers also contain medals, awards, and certificates presented to Wilgus during his long career.
WILLIAM J. WILGUS PAPERS

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I. NEW YORK CENTRAL & HUDSON RIVER RAILROAD

1 History of Grand Central Terminal
   Correspondence re Wilgus' role, 1903-1931
   Record of Inception and Creation of Grand Central
   Terminal Improvement, 1902-1913
   Portfolio of Important Correspondence

2 Printed Material

3 History of Grand Central Terminal (draft typescript)

4 Grand Central Terminal In Perspective (1939)
   Correspondence, final typescript, drafts, negative
   photostats, research notes (in 2 A6's)

5 Photographs

Construction of Grand Central Terminal and
Electrification of Main Line Approaches

6 Underrunning Third Rail (correspondence and
documents, 1908-1924) see also Box 12

7 General correspondence re New York Central Matters
   Woodlawn Wreck (correspondence and documents, 1907)
   Engineering reports
   Unit costs for Grand Central Terminal Improvements,
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8 NYC & HRR/New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad
   Negotiations, agreements, and joint committee
   minutes, 1903-1909

9 Meeting Minutes
   O'Rourke Engineering Construction Company/NYCHRR
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10 Reports to Electric Traction Commission, 1903-06

11 Estimates for Electric Zone Improvements, 1904-06

12 Electric Zone: standard plans, bench marks, rule
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