
Inventory of the Thornton N. Wilder Papers

Collection number: Collection 040

William H. Hannon Library
Loyola Marymount University
Los Angeles, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Thornton N. Wilder papers,

Date (inclusive): 1959-1973

Collection number: Collection 040

Creator: Wilder, Thornton, 1897-1975

Extent: 1 archival document box.2 linear feet

Repository: Loyola Marymount University. William H.Hannon Library. Department of Archives and Special Collections.
Los Angeles, California 90045-2659

Abstract: The papers consist of correspondence (letters and postcards) from Thornton Wilder to his friend, Everett W. Gibbs.

Physical location: Collection stored offsite. Research use requires both an advance notice of intent to use the collection and an appointment. To schedule an appointment, please contact the Department of Archives and Special Collection, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University: 310-338-2780, 310-338-5357.

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access

Collection is open to research under the terms of use of the Department of Archives and Special Collections, Loyola Marymount University.

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Preferred Citation

Thornton N. Wilder papers, Collection 040, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.

Acquisition Information

Donation of Everett W. Gibbs (Loyola University, Class of 1950), 1992.

Biography

Thornton Wilder (1897-1975) was a noted American playwright and novelist. His plays include *Our Town* (1938), *The Skin of Our Teeth* (1942), and *The Matchmaker* (1954)--later adapted to film as "Hello, Dolly!". His novels include *The Cabala* (1926), *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (1927), *The Ides of March* (1948), *The Eighth Day* (1967), and others. In his work, Wilder sought out universal values regardless of the place or time of the setting. As a playwright he was very innovative, discarding props and scenery and making his characters address the audience directly.

Scope and Content of Collection

The papers consist of correspondence from Thornton Wilder to his friend, Everett W. Gibbs (Loyola University, class of 1950). The letters and postcards of the collection, thirty-nine items in all, contain friendly criticism of Gibbs' writing, advice on his writing career, reflections on literature and the art of writing, and general news on various subjects. All of the correspondence is incoming from Wilder to Gibbs, except for the items in folder 4, a letter of recommendation for Gibbs from the director of Fullerton Junior College, and in folder 11, a change of address postcard from Isabel Wilder to Gibbs.

Arrangement

The thirty-nine items of correspondence in this collection are arranged chronologically, from the oldest piece of correspondence (October 15, 1953) to the most recent (September 24, 1973).

Indexing Terms

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

Subjects

Wilder, Thornton, 1897-1975--Correspondence

Gibbs, Everett W.--Correspondence

Authors, American--20th Century

- box 1 : 1 **Wilder writes of taking a trip to Europe. He comments on Shakespeare's frequent use of printing as a metaphor for sexual relations and suggests "Sexual Imagery in William Shakespeare" as a title for a thesis that Gibbs is writing. Date taken from postmark. October 15, 1959**
- box 1 : 2 **Wilder comments on sexual imagery in Shakespeare's Henry IV. November 18, 1959**
- box 1 : 3 **Wilder complains about the heat where he is staying. Sends more examples of sexual imagery in William Shakespeare. In Twelfth Night Act II Scene IV and in King Lear Act IV Scene VI. Wilder also states that he is planning to look through Much Ado About Nothing and As You Like It. January 1, 1960**
- box 1 : 4 **H. Lynn Sheller, Director, Fullerton Junior College, letter of recommendation for Everett Gibbs. January 11, 1960**
- box 1 : 5 **Wilder comments on the news that Gibbs has been dismissed from his position at Fullerton College. January 19, 1960**
- box 1 : 6 **Wilder talks about an upcoming trip to Naples. Mentions that an American company, with Helen Hayes, will be performing one of his plays in Europe. February 26, 1961**
- box 1 : 7 **Wilder apologizes for not writing and explains that he has spent the last six months living like a hermit out in the desert. He writes that he is thinking of returning to civilization in about a year and that he is interested about how Gibbs's thesis is coming along. November 6, 1962**
- box 1 : 8 **Writing from Douglas, Arizona, Wilder complains about having to remain there during the summer, but indicates that the novel he is writing is going well. July 9, 1963**
- box 1 : 9 **Sends thank you for birthday congratulations. He thinks that Hemingway is an elegant writer, but dislikes him personally. Wilder has seen Hello Dolly and enjoyed it. Date taken from postmark. May 12, 1965**
- box 1 : 10 **Wilder writes about going to his forty-fifth class reunion and a good Italian restaurant in Lenox. He gives suggestions on writing funny situations for novels. October 5, 1965**

- box 1 : 11 **Change of address postcard for Thornton Wilder from Isabel Wilder to Everett Gibbs. November 19, 1965**
- box 1 : 12 **Wilder gives advice on writing humor. Postcard enclosed in an envelope. Date from taken postmark. November 30, 1965**
- box 1 : 13 **Wilder sends his thanks for a birthday present sent by Gibbs, a Buttercup yellow sweater. Talks about his novel and an inflammation in his eye. April 17, 1966**
- box 1 : 14 **Advises Gibbs not to be silent if his feelings are hurt. Indicates that he is on the last lap of his latest novel. August 7, 1966**
- box 1 : 15 **Wilder complains that the summer was too hot for him. Admits to glamorizing "society" in The Cabala. Encourages Gibbs to stick with teaching until he gets his doctorate. He tells Gibbs that he will soon be going abroad to Germany. October, 1966**
- box 1 : 16 **Wilder writes (on postcard) from Switzerland. Says that the sanatorium that Mann depicted in he Magic Mountain has been turned into a hotel-"Lord be praised." January 1, 1967**
- box 1 : 17 **Wilder writes, thanking Gibbs for the birthday present he sent. He also says that he is looking foreword to reading Gibbs's book, wonders what Gibbs wants him to comment on and states that he is becoming more and more anti-social. Date taken from postmark. April 22, 1967**
- box 1 : 18 **Wilder writes a short note about his vacation and that Gibbs's book "sounds extraordinary." Date taken from postmark. May 10, 1967**
- box 1 : 19 **Brief comments on Gibbs' writing. Two postcards enclosed in an envelope. 1967**
- box 1 : 20 **Wilder comments on Gibbs' book. He feels that it is well written, but suffers from the author's "intense emotional involvement." Not publishable in the present market. May 22, 1967**
- box 1 : 21 **Wilder responds to Gibbs' reaction to his comments on his book (Forty Days). He writes: "I feel fine about your letter." Date taken from postmark. June 5, 1967**
- box 1 : 22 **Wilder complains about his eyesight. He admonishes Gibbs for being too sensitive about his comments on his writing. June 25, 1967**
- box 1 : 23 **Wilder thanks Gibbs for his praise of his birthplace. Agog at learning that the close of The Dead is "a steal from Homer." Mentioned a dinner party where alcohol was not served, but the guests were offered pot. Date taken from postmark. Thursday. July 1967**
- box 1 : 24 **Wilder tells Gibbs to resist any of his suggestions if he feels that he misunderstood things. Compliments Gibbs on catching a reference in his novel that no one else had. October 7, 1967**
- box 1 : 25 **Wilder sends a Christmas greeting (on a postcard) and gives Gibbs his temporary address in Paris and tells him to write to him soon. December 3, 1967**
- box 1 : 26 **Wilder complains about a TV production in recognition of his seventieth birthday and says that he'll have nothing to do with it. Tells Gibbs not to get discouraged and to take his book to a publisher. February 20, 1968**
- box 1 : 27 **Wilder writes that he decided to open his present early because the package said "Letter Included" and he wanted to read the letter. Praises Gibbs for the work he did for a Senator and is pleased with youth's involvement in politics. Easter Monday, 1968**

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- box 1 : 28 **Wilder writes from the Canary Islands. He says that the difference between gossip and fiction is little more than a difference in tone and depth. He goes on to say that his autobiography is half written. He advises Gibbs that if he has lost confidence in story writing that he should try writing a critical study. March 24, 1969**
- box 1 : 29 **Wilder writes Gibbs thanking him for the birthday present that he sent. He is delighted to hear that Gibbs is planning to write during the summer. Some of Wilder's war buddies will be dropping by to visit him and that he'll have to drop everything. Year taken from postmark. April 17, 1969**
- box 1 : 30 **Empty envelope. May 12, 1969**
- box 1 : 31 **Wilder writes to Gibbs thanking him for his birthday greetings and for the news of Gibbs' book, 40 Days and 40 Nights. He hopes Gibbs enjoyed the movie "Alice's Restaurant" despite its sad message. Year taken from postmark. April 17, 1970**
- box 1 : 32 **Wilder notes the melancholy tone of Gibbs' last letter and tells him that he has spent too much time on his previous book and needs to move on to other projects. September 28 or 29, 1970**
- box 1 : 33 **Wilder sends a Christmas greeting to Gibbs. He tells Gibbs that he is happy that he has some appreciative classes and that it is good he is working on a new book. December 17, 1970**
- box 1 : 34 **Wilder considers reading fiction as the best way to prompt ideas. He writes that "the Bridge" was partly derived from reading Fabre on insects. Recommends the movies "My Night with Maude" and "Claire's Knee." Written on a postcard. April 17, 1971**
- box 1 : 35 **Warns Gibbs to not become brooding and self-centered. Written on postcard. December 19, 1972**
- box 1 : 36 **Wilder informs Gibbs that he finished his novel a few days earlier. He also tells Gibbs that he can use his name as a reference any time he wants. He mentions that he won't be able to go abroad this year but he will be going to Martha's Vineyard and all his mail will be forwarded to him. Written on a postcard. April 19, 1973**
- box 1 : 37 **Wilder comments about Gibbs's upcoming move to Alaska. Warns him that loneliness might make him depressed, but tells him the people there are fine folk and will accept him after a year or so. He also asks that Gibbs keep a journal. June 4, 1973**
- box 1 : 38 **Wilder complains about a slipped disk and going to the hospital. He is happy to hear that Gibbs is getting adjusted and that he hopes that Gibbs like the book he is sending. Written on a postcard; date taken from postmark. September 11, 1973**
- box 1 : 39 **Wilder writes about the completion of his latest book and about being hospitalized with a slipped disk. He advises Gibbs on survival techniques in his new location. September 24, 1973**