

James T. Elwell Papers

COLLECTION SUMMARY

Collection number: B511, Accession # 2019.010.0001-.0003

Collection repository: Hennepin History Museum
2303 Third Ave
Minneapolis, MN 55404

Collection title: James T. Elwell Papers

Dates: 1828-1940

Extent: 1.66 linear ft. (2 document boxes, 1 oversized box)

Creator: James T. Elwell

Language of the Material: English

Processed by: Jennie Walker Knoot, 2019

ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY

James T. Elwell served as Republican State Senator from the 39th District (University of Minnesota) and had careers in manufacturing and real estate. He is perhaps best known for authoring the Elwell Law for the acquisition and assessment of property. During his political career, Elwell successfully advocated for the development of the University of Minnesota campus and enlargement of Minneapolis' park program.

Elwell was born on July 2, 1855 in St. Anthony, Minnesota to Talmadge and Margaret (Miller) Elwell. During the US Dakota War of 1862, Elwell's family fled to Fort Ripley for safety. Eventually, they settled in Minneapolis, where, at the age of 16, Elwell invented a bed spring. In 1877, he began a career in manufacturing, constructing a plant to produce his bed spring invention. In 1882, he married Elizabeth Alden. His manufacturing business grew into two plants and, in 1883, Elwell turned the business over to his brother George and went into real estate. During this time, Elwell built several residential developments in Minneapolis. Additionally, he purchased over 52,000 acres in Anoka county, which he converted to arable land after draining the swampy land through a system of 200 miles of ditches.

Elwell was elected state representative from Anoka County (District 45) in 1899. He served for one year. In 1907, he was elected to the state senate from the 39th district and served continuously until 1914. In 1913, he ran for Governor of Minnesota and, in 1925, he ran for Mayor of Minneapolis. Neither campaign was successful. One of the policies for which he was most recognized by his contemporaries was Elwell's Law (chapter 185), which he authored. Elwell's Law was signed into law in 1911 and provided that public improvements may be financed with a portion of the cost being assessed against benefitted property and the rest paid for by the city at large. Elwell passed away on August 10, 1933.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

A portion of the materials in this collection were donated by James T. Elwell's daughter, Margaret Elwell, and her husband, George Cook. The collection includes correspondences between Elwell family members and professional correspondences regarding Elwell's political, business, and real estate career. Included in the correspondence series are letters from Lotus Coffman, Maria Sanford, Charles Morgridge Loring, Cyrus Northrop, and Governor J. A. A. Burnquist. This collection also includes personal papers consisting of a scrapbook (creator unidentified), various handwritten topical essays, documents regarding several University of Minnesota funding projects, publications on Elwell's Good Roads Law, materials related to Elwell's campaigns for Senate, Mayor, and Governor including marketing materials, letters and petitions of support and articles.

In addition, the collection consists of newspaper clippings, specifically regarding the Elwell Law, Elwell's work with the University of Minnesota, and various board, committee, and business projects of which Elwell was part. There are also obituary clippings for James Elwell and his wife, Elizabeth Elwell.

The collection is arranged in 3 series with no sub-series. The series includes:

- Series 1: Correspondence
- Series 2: Personal papers
- Series 3: Newspaper clippings

ACCESS

The collection is open for researchers and has no restrictions.

COPYRIGHT

The researcher assumes responsibility for ensuring copyright is followed. When and where possible the archive will provide information related to the copyright owners, but it will be the responsibility of the researcher to ensure copyright laws are followed. Requests for permission to publish material in this collection should be directed to the Archivist.

RELATED MATERIAL

Additional items on James T. Elwell can be found in these other collections.

- Hennepin History Museum –
 - Call #: 929A. Alden-Shedd Families: Elwell- Grimes- Morse, Part II of the Albert Martin Alden Family Series by William Archie Wheeler, 1965. [Book]
 - Call #: B94.7b. Board of Park Commissioners, Minneapolis, to the Hon. James T. Elwell in the Minnesota Senate Chamber, 1911. [Letter]
 - Call #: B28.4. E. R. Buell. A portfolio of cartoons, 1915. Page 71. [Book]
 - Call #: B24.1. Elwell, James T. Herschel, Hambletonian Stallion (advertising card), ca. 1890.
 - Call #: B24.1. Catalogue of the Golden Lake Herd of Holstein-Friesian cattle, the property of James T. Elwell, 1889.

- Call #: B14.8. Elwell, James T. grocery bills, 1882, 1884.
- Call #: B14.8. Rauch and Lang Electric Car Company, letters to James T. Elwell, 1916.
- Call #: B88.1. Ripley, Dr. Martha G., bill for services, 1888.
- Call #: B66.1. Hennepin County Historical Society. Interviews (handwritten). *See interview with Charles M. Way, 1938-1939.*
- Call #: B88.21. Statement from Goodfellow and Eastman Dry Goods, 1884.
- Call #: B125. Transportation/B160-Hennepin County Good Roads Association.
- Blaine Historical Society
- Minnesota History Center, Gale Family Library – Call #: I.160. James T. Elwell photograph collection.
- Minnesota History Center, Gale Family Library – Call #: KFM5844 .A3 1919. The Elwell law : an act relating to the acquisition of lands for streets, parks and parkways in cities of the first class and the improvement and government thereof, and the improvement and government of existing streets, parks and parkways : together with other laws relating to the Board of Park Commissioners of the City of Minneapolis, Minnesota / compiled by James D. Shearer, attorney for the board.
- Minnesota Legislative Reference Library database - <https://www.leg.state.mn.us/legdb/fulldetail?id=12697>. Biographical information.
- The Northwest Architectural Archives Collecting Area – Call #: N115, Minneapolis Plan Vault Collection, Box 359. James Elwell Warehouse Building, 722-24 Central Ave.

ACQUISITION

Material in this collection was donated in part by Margaret (Elwell) and George Cook.

COLLECTION INVENTORY

Series 1: Correspondence

<u>Box No.</u>	<u>Folder No.</u>	
1	1	Correspondence: Elwell, Elizabeth and Margaret Elwell (Mrs. George Cook) from Maria L. Sanford, 1906-1919
1	2	Correspondence: Elwell, Elizabeth (Mrs. James T.). 1909-1928
1	3	Correspondence: Elwell, Elizabeth (Mrs. James T.) from Watson Elwell, 1918
1	4	Correspondence: Elwell, Elizabeth (Mrs. James T.) re: James' death, 1933
1	5	Correspondence: Elwell, James T., 1902-1925
1	6	Correspondence: Elwell, James T. from George Elwell, 1916
1	7	Correspondence: Elwell, James T. from Watson Elwell, 1918
1	8	Correspondence: Elwell, James T. from Lotus Coffman re: Alden Worcester Elwell's death, 1927
1	9	Correspondence: Holiday greetings, 1920-1921, undated
1	10	Correspondence: Invitations, 1899-1928
1	11	Correspondence: Elwell, Lawrence from Watson Elwell, 1918

1	12	Correspondence: Elwell, Margaret (Mrs. George Cook), World's Fair souvenir cards, 1893
1	13	Correspondence: Elwell, Ruth and Mary from Watson Elwell, 1915, 1918
1	14	Correspondence: Stationery, undated

Series 2: Personal Papers

<u>Box No.</u>	<u>Folder No.</u>	
1	15	Elwell, James T. Senate work, receipts, farm map donated by George and Margaret (Elwell) Cook, 1882-1915
2	16	Scrapbook, 1889-1908
2	17	Unsigned essays, 1828-1829
2	18	Elwell, James T. real estate and property, 1890-1915
2	19	Publications re: good roads, 1902-1912
2	20	Elwell, James T. re: Senate work, 1905-1915
2	21	Elwell, James T. campaign for Senate, 1906, 1910
2	22	Elwell, James T. First Minnesota Conservation and Agricultural Development Congress Delegate Certificate, 1910
2	23	University of Minnesota – Minnesota Alumni Weekly, 1910, 1926-1927
2	24	University of Minnesota proposals for funding, 1911, undated
2	25	University of Minnesota 40 th annual commencement program, 1912
2	26	Elwell, James T. campaign for Governor of Minnesota, 1913-1914
2	27	Appellant's reply brief: Helmer Carlson vs. James T. Elwell, 1914
2	28	In memoriam essay for Mattie Laura Elwell Noyes, 1914
2	29	Elwell's Road Law/Good Roads, 1914-1915, undated
2	30	Elwell, James T. membership and calling cards, 1915, undated
2	31	Elwell, James T. Republican National Committee member certificate, 1916
2	32	Elwell, Watson Pillsbury Academy report card, 1918
2	33	Elwell, James campaign for Mayor, 1925
2	34	Seven Rich States, autographed copy and letter to James T. Elwell by Elias Rachie, 1929
2	35	Funeral oration for James T. Elwell by Dr. George P. Conger
2	36	Dedication of Elwell Field in James T. Elwell's honor, 1940
2	37	Elwell, James T. handwritten financial notes, undated

Series 3: Newspaper Clippings

<u>Box No.</u>	<u>Folder No.</u>	
3	38	Eberhart, Governor A. O., 1907-1909
3	39	Elwell, James T. Western Press Clipping Exchange receipts
3	40	Elwell, Edwin S., 1915
3	41	Elwell, Elizabeth (Mrs. James T.) obituary, 1936

3	42	Elwell, George H., undated
3	43	Elwell, James T. convicts rock crushing bill, 1907-1909
3	44	Elwell, James T. Road Law/Good Roads, Part 1, 1911-1918
3	45	Elwell, James T. Road Law/Good Roads, Part 2, 1911-1918
3	46	Elwell, James T. Road Law/Good Roads, Part 3, 1911-1918
3	47	Elwell, James T. Road Law/Good Roads, Part 4, 1911-1918
3	48	Elwell, James T. Road Law/Good Roads, Part 5, 1911-1918
3	49	Elwell, James T. Road Law/Good Roads, Part 6, 1911-1918
3	50	Elwell, James T. Road Law/Good Roads, Part 7, 1911-1918
3	51	Elwell, James T. Road Law/Good Roads, Part 8, 1911-1918
3	52	Elwell, James T. Road Law/Good Roads, Part 9, 1911-1918
3	53	Elwell, James T. Road Law/Good Roads, Part 10, 1911-1918
3	54	Elwell, James T. attendance at events, 1910-1913
3	55	Elwell, James T. farms and agriculture, 1913
3	56	Elwell, James T. suit against city garbage contract, undated
3	57	Elwell, James T. Hennepin County, 1907-1923
3	58	Elwell, James T. Industrial Development Committee, 1912
3	59	Elwell, James T. Mississippi Dam power project, 1903
3	60	Elwell, James T. obituary, 1933
3	61	Elwell, James T. park board, 1908-1916
3	62	Elwell, James T. personal, 1913
3	63	Elwell, James T. railroads and street railways, 1909-1915
3	64	Elwell, James T. school board, 1907-1918
3	65	Elwell, James T. real estate, 1909
3	66	Elwell, James T. Senate sessions, 1907, 1914
3	67	Elwell, James T. State Fair, 1911
3	68	Elwell, James T. Temperance movement, 1911
3	69	Elwell, James T. legislation, University of Minnesota, 1907-1913
3	70	Elwell, James T. Certificate of Incorporation of Waconia State Bank, 1911
3	71	Elwell, James T. Washington Hall of Fame, 1909
3	72	Elwell, James T. wetland reclamation, 1907-1915
3	73	Elwell, Lawrence R., 1917
3	74	Elwell, Talmadge, 1901, undated



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