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# Guide to the Mary Bolton Wirth Papers 1916-1975 (bulk 1950-1969)



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## **Descriptive Summary**

<b>Identifier</b>	ICU.SPCL.WIRTHMB
<b>Title</b>	Wirth, Mary Bolton. Papers
<b>Date</b>	1916-1975 (bulk 1950-1969)
<b>Size</b>	2.5 linear ft. (5 boxes)
<b>Repository</b>	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.
<b>Abstract</b>	Social worker. Contains correspondence, manuscripts, reports, memoranda, interviews, articles, notes, notebooks, travel accounts, biographical material, and photographs. Papers document Wirth's active career as a social worker, especially in the area of Chicago public housing. Includes material relating to the Chicago Housing Authority for which Wirth served as Supervisor of Community and Tenant Relations (1952-1958), the Department of Urban Renewal, and an investigation of the Office of Economic Opportunity in Michigan. Also includes material relating to University of Chicago alumni activities and Wirth's reaction over the non-reappointment of Marlene Dixon to the faculty at the University.

## **Information on Use**

### **Access**

No restrictions

### **Citation**

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Wirth, Mary Bolton. Papers, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

### **Biographical Note**

Mary Bolton Wirth, wife of the University of Chicago sociologist, Louis Wirth, had a distinguished career as a social worker over a period of more than fifty years, principally in the city of Chicago. Her prominence within her profession--she served as Executive Secretary of the Chicago chapter of the American Association of Social Workers from 1939-49 and as Supervisor of Community and Tenant Relations with the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) from 1952-58--gave her the opportunity to struggle with and reflect upon many of the problems of administering social welfare programs, especially those in the field of public housing. After 1958, Mrs. Wirth continued to advise and consult on public housing.

## Scope Note

The papers are arranged in six series.

Series I: Professional Papers, contains correspondence, memoranda, and brief case reports and position papers. Most of this material deals with problems in public housing. Typical is an analysis of gang activities at the Jane Addams project (9/30/53), which should be supplemented by reference to a notebook in Box 4, folder 9. The bulk of the correspondence was directed to or from local Chicago agencies concerned with public housing.

Two letters in particular, however, are outside this ordinary range:

-A letter to Senator Percy (2/10/73) critical of federal administration policies on housing and social programs.

-A letter to the Sun Times (7/11/74) critical of an article published by that newspaper (the reply of Marshall Field and a clipping of the article are included).

In addition to the above two letters, the following are important because of the prominence of their correspondents.

-From John H. Ballard, Executive Director, Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago (8/21/70).

-From David L. Daniel, Director, Cook County Department of Public Aid. (3/21/73).

-From Paul Douglas, Alderman, City of Chicago (9/18/40).

-To Philip Hauser, Professor of Sociology, University of Chicago (12/7/64).

-From Jack Meltzer, Director, Center for Urban Studies, University of Chicago (5/22/67).

-From Daniel Ryan, President, Board of Commissioners of Cook County, Illinois (7/7/59).

-From Wilma Walker, Professor Emeritus, School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago (2/20/63).

Very little of this material touches on Mrs. Wirth's own life and career per se, but there are exceptions: 7/15/22, 11/29/24, 8/24/29, 12/23/31, 6/28/35, 12/23/35, 2/16/38, 9/18/40, 1/13/44, 6/22/49, 9/8/52, 10/11/56, 5/7/58, 6/24/58, 7/7/59, 5/22/67, 12/2/72. This last letter and the undated letter to the Paducah News (folder 7) should be consulted by anyone interested in the biography of Mary Bolton Wirth, as should a letter of 6/11/58 in the section on "Local Housing Materials."

Series II: Writings, includes material less occasional and less ephemeral than that in the preceding section and contains both Mary Bolton Wirth's published writings and other examples of her

work in unpublished form. The articles are arranged alphabetically by title. The book reviews are arranged alphabetically by author of the work under review. Note should be taken of an untitled and undated draft of a statement in defense of the Chicago Housing Authority, written after Mary Bolton Wirth had left the.

Series III: Local Housing, parallels Wirth's own correspondence. They provide much the same kind of information as the "Professional Correspondence," but their material was not written by or sent directly to Mary Bolton Wirth, but rather would have been subsequently referred to her attention. There are, for example, memoranda that circulated within the Chicago Housing Authority during Mary Bolton Wirth's time as supervisor (1952-58) and memoranda from the Department of Urban Renewal during the subsequent period when she continued to act as an adviser and consultant. A great amount of this material comes from the early 1960's.

Series I and Series III together offer a picture of the issues in housing that developed in Chicago over a number of years.

Series IV: Notes and Notebooks, is subdivided according to topics. Some duplication of material exists both within and between subdivisions. Several of these subdivisions correspond to special projects or studies to which Mary Bolton Wirth contributed (e.g., the investigation of the Office of Economic Opportunity in Michigan, part of the general Great Lakes Project under the direction of Jack Meltzer of the Center for Urban Studies, University of Chicago which was itself a part of the broader U. S. Senate investigation of the Office).

The material in Series V: University of Chicago revolves mainly around concerns of the past alumni matters, reunions of the class of 1920, controversy over two versions (R. Pollak's and Mary Bolton Wirth's) of what life had been like on the University of Chicago campus circa 1920. Mary Bolton Wirth's "Report to Alice and Elizabeth" is an important witness to the troubles arising out of the debate over the academic fate of Marlene Dixon, an assistant professor of Sociology, in 1969. Also important is a copy of Mary Bolton Wirth's letter to the University of Chicago Alumni Association (6/15/62) taking blunt exception to the granting of an award to Dr. Morris Fishbein.

Among the correspondents in this section are: Herbert Blumer (9/11/68), Everett C. Hughes (5/31/68), Albert Pick, Jr. (10/18/70), and Hubert I. Will (5/31/66). Also included is a letter from Mary Bolton Wirth's daughter, Elizabeth Wirth Marvick, to the President of the University of Chicago Alumni Association (5/13/74).

Folder 3 contains two issues of "Twenty's Tabloid" reporting on the twentieth and fortieth reunions of the Class of 1920; a questionnaire sent to class members prior to the fiftieth reunion, and Mary Wirth's handwritten, critical evaluation of the reunion. Folder 4 contains material concerning her 1966 Alumni Citation for Public Service award.

Series VI: Travel, Biography and Photographs includes accounts of four trips to California, London, Vienna, and the U. S. South—showing Mary Bolton Wirth in a somewhat more personal light, but never with her more social concerns very far from her mind. The correspondence is largely generated by these travel pieces. The biographical materials include evaluations,

certificates of membership, and other personal documents. The researcher might find particularly helpful Mary Bolton Wirth's job description of her responsibilities as Supervisor of Community and Tenant Relations. Series VI also contains photographs of the University campus, student friends, and some neighborhood scenes, ca. 1916-1917.

## **Related Resources**

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html>

Wirth, Louis. Papers

## **Subject Headings**

- Wirth, Mary Bolton
- Dixon, Marlene
- University of Chicago-Alumni and alumnae
- Chicago (Ill.). Dept. of Urban Renewal
- Michigan. Economic Opportunity Office
- Chicago Housing Authority
- Women social workers
- Social workers
- Social service
- Public housing
- Public housing-Illinois-Chicago
- Public welfare

## **INVENTORY**

### **Series I: Professional Correspondence**

**Box 1**

**Folder 1**

1922-56

**Box 1**

**Folder 2**

1957-58

**Box 1**

**Folder 3**

1959-61

**Box 1**

**Folder 4**

1962

**Box 1**

**Folder 5**

1963-70

**Box 1**

**Folder 6**  
1971-75

**Box 1**

**Folder 7**  
Undated

## **Series II: Writings**

**Box 1**

**Folder 8**  
Advisory--Recreation

**Box 1**

**Folder 9**  
Relocation--Welfare

**Box 1**

**Folder 10**  
Untitled

**Box 1**

**Folder 11**  
Book Reviews

## **Series III: Local Housing Materials**

**Box 1**

**Folder 12**  
1948-51

**Box 1**

**Folder 13**  
1952-53

**Box 1**

**Folder 14**  
1954-56

**Box 1**

**Folder 15**  
1957-59

**Box 2**

**Folder 1**  
1960-61

**Box 2**

**Folder 2**  
January, 1962-October, 1962

**Box 2**

**Folder 3**  
November, 1962-December, 1962

**Box 2**

**Folder 4**  
January 1, 1963-January 15, 1963

**Box 2**

**Folder 5**

January 16, 1963-February, 1963

**Box 2**

**Folder 6**

March, 1963

**Box 2**

**Folder 7**

April-December, 1963

**Box 2**

**Folder 8**

1964-67

**Box 2**

**Folder 9**

1968-73

**Box 2**

**Folder 10**

Undated

**Box 2**

**Folder 11**

Undated

**Box 2**

**Folder 12**

Undated

**Series IV: Notes and Notebooks**

**Subseries 1: Chicago Housing and the Chicago Housing Authority**

**Box 2**

**Folder 13**

1950's

**Box 2**

**Folder 14**

Jane Addams House in the early 1950's

**Box 2**

**Folder 15**

CHA in the later period

**Box 2**

**Folder 16**

CHA in the later period

**Box 2**

**Folder 17**

CHA in the later period

**Box 3**

**Folder 1**

Hand-written working notes on CHA

**Box 3**



**Folder 2**

- Two notebooks on CHA
- Two handwritten manuscripts reviewing the history of social legislation

**Box 3**

**Folder 3**

Various speech and discussion notes

**Box 3**

**Folder 4**

Topically indexed notebook collection of items on housing, first part

**Box 3**

**Folder 5**

Topically indexed notebook collection of items on housing, second part

**Subseries 2: Urban Renewal**

**Box 3**

**Folder 6**

Materials for a study on relocation, put together by MBW (1964-65) for the Hauser Report

**Box 3**

**Folder 7**

- Two copies of MBW's survey (Nov. 15, 1962) of Hyde Park-Kenwood Urban Renewal
- Two notebooks (1960-1961) on relocation in Hyde Park

**Box 3**

**Folder 8**

- Notes for a speech, "The Big Decade in Urban Renewal"
- Copy of a manuscript, "Memorandum on a proposed study of the effect of re-housing families living under sub-standard conditions"

**Box 3**

**Folder 9**

Additional material on urban renewal

**Box 3**

**Folder 10**

General Documents

**Box 3**

**Folder 11-14**

Project descriptions and other material

**Box 4**

**Folder 1-4**

General Documents

**Box 4**

**Folder 5**

Notes

- Notes on 1973 Seminar on Housing for the Elderly (Loop College)

**Box 4**

**Folder 6**

Material from the Loop College seminar

**Box 4**

**Folder 7**

Additional material on housing and the elderly

**Box 4**

**Folder 8**

Typical Fund-raising Kit

**Box 4**

**Folder 9**

- Notebook on gangs
- 1953 case notebook
- Manuscript chart of housing and economic status of housing clients

**Box 4**

**Folder 10**

Packet of housing statistics for Chicago neighborhoods

**Box 4**

**Folder 11**

- Client address cards
- Case work information cards

**Box 4**

**Folder 12**

Newspaper clippings, 1959-75 and undated; mostly from Chicago papers and mainly dealing with housing

**Series V: University of Chicago**

**Box 5**

**Folder 1**

Correspondence relating to University of Chicago (1962-74)

**Box 5**

**Folder 2**

Articles

- Robert Pollak, "Those Were the Days" Offprint of University of Chicago Magazine (Oct., 1967)
- "1916-1920 at the University of Chicago by Alumna Anonyma [MBW]."
- Edited copy and a xerox of "These are the Days," the title under which the piece appeared in the letter columns of the University of Chicago Magazine (June, 1968)
- "Report to Alice and Elizabeth." Two copies

**Box 5**

**Folder 3**

Class of 1920: 20th, 40th, and 50th Reunions

**Box 5**

**Folder 4**

1966 Alumni Citation for Public Service

**Series VI: Biography, Travel and Photographs**

**Box 5**

**Folder 5**

Miscellaneous

- "Vacation News Letter," Stanford, Calif., Aug., 1948
- "A Busman's Holiday. Letter from London," July, 1961
- "A Letter from the Vienna not in the Guide Books," 1966
- "Oh, I Looked out the Window and What did I See? (not really a band of angels--), or, Why Stay on the Ground," undated

**Box 5**

**Folder 6**

Correspondence and a magazine note relating to this travel

**Box 5**

**Folder 7**

Biographical Documents

**Box 5**

**Folder 8**

Photographs ca. 1916-1917