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Guide to MS147 Otto H. Thorman Records

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Guide to

MS 147

Otto H. Thorman Records

Span Dates: 1910 - 1964

12.5 linear feet; approximately 5,360 oversized items

Processed by Rose Hillbrand August 2000

Donated by Mrs. O. H. Thorman, 1972

Citation: Otto Thorman Records, 1910-1964, MS 147, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department. The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department University of Texas at El Paso

Biography

Otto H. Thorman was born on April 12, 1887 in Missouri and grew up in St. Louis and Washington, Missouri. After receiving his architectural training by correspondence, he established an office in Albuquerque, NM. In 1911, he opened an office in El Paso, and he met Adelia Wallwork a year later. In 1914 they were married, and later had five children. Called by some "one of the most successful architects of the southwest," Thorman remained in El Paso and practiced architecture until his death on March 11, 1966.

Many of Thorman's designs were in the Pueblo and Spanish styles, and his work was mainly residential, although he did some commercial designs such as the Women's Club of El Paso, the El Paso Free Public Library, and the pavilion for the Liberty Statue in Pioneer Plaza. Although most of the jobs Thorman completed were located in the El Paso area, the collection also contains records of work in such diverse areas as Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Missouri. Thorman was also a gardener, and frequently worked on the landscaping of the grounds of the buildings he designed. Thorman held the directorship of the Texas Society of Architects in 1941, and he also held several offices in the El Paso Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Some records of these activities are also contained within the collection.

Series Description

The collection is organized into three series:

- I. Client Files: 26 ½ boxes, 5,360 drawings. Arranged alphabetically by client name, this series contains 2 sub-series:
 - Project Files: contains correspondence, specifications, bids, estimates, bills, receipts, notes, and approximately 310 drawings, which are stored flat in 2 oversize boxes and 2 drawers.
 - 2. Drawings: Approximately 5,050 drawings stored flat in 1 box and 18 drawers.
- II. Office Files: 3 boxes. This series contains mostly different types of reference materials or architectural resources.
 - 1. Supply Catalogs: catalogs and brochures from various architecture-related vendors.
 - 2. Specifications: unlabeled specifications, or specifications for specific job types.
 - 3. Design: reference materials useful in building design.
 - 4. Miscellaneous: safety codes, zoning board regulations, bills and payrolls.

III. Photographs: ½ box. Approximately 80 8 X 10 black-and-white photos.

Scope and Content Notes

This collection contains records kept by O. H. Thorman during his career as an architect in the Southwest. Series I is composed of architectural records and drawings of buildings commissioned by clients. Sub-series 1 consists of documents pertaining to the design and construction of buildings. Sub-series 2 contains drawings, blueprints, surveys, elevations, structural details, and sketches done by clients. Most of the designs are for residences, but there are some commercial buildings included.

Series II contains vendor catalogs, specifications for specific types of jobs, codes of regulations and other reference materials pertaining to design, safety, or supplies.

Series III consists of black-and-white photographs depicting some of the buildings designed by Thorman, mostly from the 1920's and 1930's.

The physical makeup of the collection is mainly paper records, large drawings on paper or linen, and blueprints. There are also some black-and-white photographs with canvas backing.

Provenance Statement

The collection was donated to the C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department by Mrs. O. H. Thorman in 1972.

Literary Rights Statement

Permission to publish material from the *Otto H. Thorman Records* must be obtained from the C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, the University of Texas at El Paso Library.

Related Collections

J.E. Morgan & Sons Construction Photographs, PH 020

Notes to the Researcher

Many of the drawings are on very fragile or brittle paper, and should be handled with extreme care. Some of the older paper records are also yellow and crumbling.