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John Wilton collection finding aid

Title: John Wilton collection finding aid
Collection No: MSS.0079
Extent: 0.2 cubic feet (1 volume)
Inclusive Dates: 1888-1917

Abstract: Manuscript musical compositions and arrangements of civil engineer, John Wilton, 1847-1922, Memphis, Tennessee.

Processed by: Grace Neeley, 2022.
Access: Open to all researchers.
Language: English
Preferred Citation: John Wilton collection, Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis

Publication date: 2022 October

Biographical Information

John Wilton, civil engineer and musician, was born on a farm near Grafas, Sweden on November 27, 1847. He took up the violin at an early age. With his share of his father's estate, he attended Chalmers Polytechnic Institute in Gothenburg, Sweden, graduating with honors and with the qualifications of a civil engineer in 1864. After graduation, Wilton immigrated to America and worked as a railroad shop hand in Water Valley, Mississippi. He relocated to Memphis, Tennessee in 1870 and worked for a number of firms, and later entered the government service on a snagboat. The snagboat was transferred to St. Louis and Wilton, after a period in Michigan, returned to Memphis. In 1896 he drew the plans for Forest Hill Cemetery and in 1897 he entered the city employ as a draftsman in the city engineer's office. In 1910, he was transferred to the water department, continuing there until his death.

Wilton began to write music after a number of years as an amateur violinist and he wrote over 200 compositions for the violin, piano, band, and orchestra. Only one was ever published, the "Flag of Freedom," a patriotic song printed in 1917 in Memphis, TN. John Wilton died on February 2, 1922, at the age of 74. Wilton's own composition for the violin, "Elegie," was played at his funeral. He was survived by his second wife, two children, and six grandchildren.

Scope and contents

1 volume book titled "J. Wilton's Compositions for Violin and Piano" containing musical compositions of John Wilton from 1888-1917. Includes Popular Swedish Melodies, Opera Melodies for A Clarinet, Opera Melodies for Bb Clarinet & Piano, Flag of Freedom – "Stars & Stripes" (Memphis, 1917), and other handwritten compositions.

Subject terms

Civil engineering.
Music—19th century.
Memphis (Tenn.)

Inventory

Box 1

1 volume book containing manuscript compositions:

- Popular Swedish Melodies, arranged by J. Wilton
- Opera Melodies for A Clarinet, arranged by J. Wilton
- Opera Melodies for a Bb Clarinet & Piano, arranged by J. Wilton

Flag of Freedom

Flag of Freedom – “Stars & Stripes” Patriotic Song, words and music by J. Wilton,
Memphis, Tennessee, copyright 1917 March

Bb Clarinet, by J. Wilton

Miscellaneous Pieces