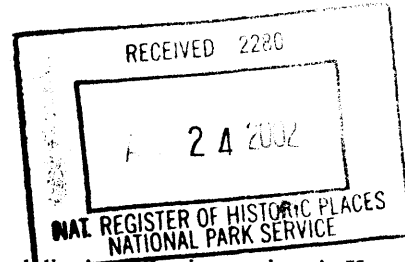


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Wirth, Theodore, House/Administration Building
other names/site number Superintendent's Residence

2. Location

street & number 3954 Bryant Avenue South not for publication
city or town Minneapolis vicinity N/A
state Minnesota code MN county Hennepin code 053
zip code 55409

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ian R. Stewart 4/17/02
Signature of certifying official Ian R. Stewart Date
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Minnesota Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Edson H. Beall 6-7-02

- entered in the National Register
 ___ See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the
 National Register
 ___ See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the
 National Register
- removed from the National Register

___ other (explain): _____

[Signature] _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	_____ buildings
<u> 1 </u>	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u> 2 </u>	_____ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
 N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling
GOVERNMENT office

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: SOCIAL Sub: civic

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: COLONIAL REVIVAL
MISSION REVIVAL
OTHER: SWISS CHALET

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
roof ASPHALT SHINGLES
walls STUCCO

other BRICK
WOOD

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1910-1946

Significant Dates 1910

1946

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

WIRTH, THEODORE

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder LAMOREAUX, LOWELL A.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 6 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing		Zone Easting Northing	
1	_____	3	_____
2	_____	4	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marjorie Pearson, Ph.D., for the Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society
organization Hess, Roise and Company date December 2001
street & number 100 North First Street telephone 612-338-1987
city or town Minneapolis state MN zip code 55401

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
street & number 400 Fourth Street South telephone 612-661-4821
city or town Minneapolis state MN zip code 55415

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Summary

The Theodore Wirth House/Administration Building is three stories high with a full, above-grade basement built into the sloping site and a below-grade cellar. The building, which is square in plan, is reinforced concrete to the height of the first floor and wood frame above. The entire building is faced in rough, cream-colored stucco, and the gabled roof is clad with green asphalt shingles. The various parapets are coped in sheet metal, painted blue-green. The original drawings specified that the coping was to be of galvanized iron. Stylistically the building evokes the Colonial Revival in its form and plan, the Mission Revival in its use of stucco and curvilinear gable forms, and the Swiss Chalet in the sawed brackets and similar details. The interior reflects an Arts and Crafts sensibility in the woodwork and built-in cabinetry.

Located in the southeastern section of the Lyndale Farmstead, north of 40th Street West and facing Bryant Avenue South, the building is sited at the top of a slope that drops off steeply to the north and west and is part of the natural topography of the overall park site. Lakewood Cemetery and Kings Highway are to the west, while small apartment buildings and freestanding houses are built on the blocks to the east and the south. A curving footpath and a driveway lead to a turnaround circle in front of the house. The footpath probably dates from the 1950s, but the driveway and turnaround circle were installed when the building was converted to office use for the current tenants. Another curving walkway set midblock between Bryant Avenue and Kings Highway leads from 40th Street West up the slope and along the south side of the building to the turnaround circle. This path follows the line of the original driveway into the site. A curvilinear path at the bottom of the slope to the west of the house enters the site at the corner of Kings Highway and 40th Street. This follows the line of an historic bridle path. Concrete steps lead up the slope along the north side of the building. A stuccoed, parapeted retaining wall extends along another pathway leading north from the house to where it intersects with the former bridle path. All pathways are paved with asphalt. The house/administration building retains a high degree of integrity; minimal changes have been made to convert the residential portion of the building to office use. The surrounding site, which contributes to the significance of the property, retains the topography and major landscaping elements that were associated with it during Wirth's occupancy and enhance our understanding of the building in relation to the park.¹

Exterior

East Side: The front of the building faces east towards Bryant Avenue and houses the portion of the building that the Wirth family used as its residence. The three-bay facade has a centrally placed one-story enclosed entrance porch. The concrete platform, the concrete-block parapet walls flanking the platform, and the four steps were installed when the curving handicapped-access ramp was built in 1997. When the building was constructed, the porch was approached by only one step. This single step was replaced by a flight of three steps when the original

¹ A complete set of plans and elevation drawings, dating from 1910 and titled "Residence for Mr. Theodore Wirth," are available in the records of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

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driveway in front of the house was removed in about 1947. The walls of the porch are faced with the same rough stucco that covers the main walls. The central door opening contains a wood-paneled door with three lights, set below a transom that is filled with a wood panel. Originally this panel was glass. Wall-mounted lamps (installed in 1997 to replace "colonial" lamps installed in about 1947) flank the doorway, and a mail slot is cut into the right door post. Large window openings flank the door opening and are placed in the side walls of the porch. The upper corners of the openings contain decorative sawed brackets. Removable two-light and four-light storm sash, painted blue-green, fill the openings. During Wirth's residency, screens replaced the storm sash during warm-weather months. Window boxes were set on brackets below these openings during the 1920s.² The porch terminates in a curvilinear parapet that is coped with sheet metal, painted blue-green. Flanking the porch at basement level are curvilinear planters installed in 1997. A concrete bandcourse differentiates the basement level from the first floor. The first-floor window openings flanking the porch contain four-over-one double-hung sash. At the second story, a three-sided bay projects above the roof of the porch. The three window openings in the bay contain three-over-one and four-over-one double-hung sash. On the original elevation drawing the central window is shown as containing diamond-pane sash. The flanking window openings have four-over-one double-hung sash. The front slope of the gabled roof encompasses the third story. The eaves extend downward to shield the second-story windows. Rafter beams are visible under the eaves. Three gable-roofed dormers punctuate the roof slope. The front wall of each dormer contains a two-over-two sash window (originally three-over-one) and terminates in a shallow flared parapet coped in sheet metal, painted blue-green. The roof of each dormer extends down over the dormer side walls, and the eaves are adorned with decorative sawed brackets.

South Side: The south side of the building faces 40th Street West. The eastern section is dominated by the gabled end wall of the residential portion. A stucco-covered chimney stack rises through the center of the curvilinear gable. Two openings with two-over-two sash light the basement level. The easternmost opening has been filled with a panel. A concrete bandcourse sets off the first story. A window opening with four-over-one sash is set to the right of the chimney stack, while a wider opening with tripartite diamond-paned casement sash is set to the left of the chimney stack. At the second story are two window openings with one-over-one sash; the two window openings at the third story level have two-over-two sash.

The western section of this side contains both residential and administrative functions. (A drafting room was at the basement level.) Because of the sloping site, the basement level is fully exposed, as well as a portion of the below-grade cellar. The cellar level has one opening with a four-light sash. Two openings at basement level contain three-over-one double-hung sash. The basement wall rises to a parapet that shields the terrace fronting the first-story sunporch. The openings of the sunporch and of the sleeping porch at the second-floor level contain non-historic metal-framed sash—single-pane casements at the first floor and one-over-one double-hung sash at the second floor. The original plans called for the openings to be screened; storm sash was installed during cold-weather months.

² The planted window boxes and the brackets without the boxes are visible in photographs taken by Wirth family members during the 1920s and 1930s. Copies are in the possession of the Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society.

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The upper corners of the sunporch openings contain decorative sawed brackets like those in the entrance porch openings. The eaves of the hipped roof above the sleeping porch are adorned with sawed brackets.

West Side: The west side of the building, facing Kings Highway at the western edge of the Lyndale Farmstead, is set into the slope of the hillside. An exterior stairway and a doorway with a multi-light door lead into the cellar. The three window openings at cellar level contain eight-light sash. At the basement level, two window openings with two-over-two sash light Wirth's original office space, while four window openings with three-over-one sash light the drafting-room space. The basement wall rises to a parapet that shields the terrace fronting the first-story sunporch. The openings of the sunporch and of the sleeping porch at the second-floor level contain non-historic metal-framed sash—single-pane casements at the first floor and one-over-one double-hung sash at the second floor. The original plans called for the openings to be screened; storm sash was installed during cold-weather months. The upper corners of the sunporch openings contain decorative sawed brackets like those in the entrance porch openings. The eaves of the hipped roof above the sleeping porch are adorned with sawed brackets. The west slope of the main gabled roof at the third-floor level extends to the roof of the sleeping porch. It is pierced by a large, centrally placed, gabled roof dormer that is detailed like those on the front of the building. A tall brick chimney stack rises through the roof at the north end.

North Side: The north side of the building is complex in its articulation, reflecting the various functions within. The basement-level office area is entered from a doorway in the northwest corner. The wood-paneled door has a multi-light window. A window opening with two-over-two double-hung sash is placed to the right of the doorway. The basement wall rises to a parapet that shields the terrace fronting the first-story sunporch. The openings of the sunporch and of the sleeping porch at the second-floor level contain non-historic metal-framed sash—single-pane casements at the first floor and one-over-one double hung sash at the second floor. The original plans called for the openings to be screened; storm sash was installed during cold-weather months. The upper corners of the sunporch openings contain decorative sawed brackets like those in the entrance porch openings. The eaves of the hipped roof above the sleeping porch are adorned with sawed brackets.

To the east of this section of the building is a projection containing a secondary entrance, approached by a set of concrete steps built over the basement level that lead to an open porch and the kitchen. A doorway with a glass and wood-paneled door on the west wall of the projection leads into a basement storage room. The basement level of the north wall has three window openings with two-over-two double-hung sash. The kitchen entrance, porch, and steps are sheltered below an overhanging roof with decorative bracketed eaves and beaded wood paneling on the underside. The entrance door is of beaded wood paneling with two glass lights near the top. The west wall of the porch area has two window openings, one with two-over-one sash, the other with three-over-one sash. On the north wall a single window with two-over-one sash lights the interior vestibule behind entrance.

The north wall of the building continues as a three-sided projecting bay that extends from the basement through the second story, terminating in a projecting cornice and covered by a shallow hipped roof. Originally the bay

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terminated in a parapet. Each face of the bay contains a window opening with four-light sash at the basement level and four-over-one double-hung sash at the first and second stories. At the second story to the right of the projecting bay are two window openings, one with two-over-one double-hung sash, the other with four-over-one double-hung sash. Two window openings with three-over-one double-hung sash are placed at the third-floor level. The wall terminates in an elaborate curvilinear parapet, coped in sheet metal painted blue-green.

Interior

First Story: The entrance porch is square in plan. The interior walls are finished with the same rough stucco that is used on the exterior. The floor is covered with vinyl tile, set in a diamond pattern. Originally the floor was exposed concrete. The ceiling is finished with beaded wood paneling and has a center light fixture. A small wood-and-glass door set in the left post of the outer doorway opens onto the inside of the mail box. Decorative sawed wood brackets are prominently situated at the upper corners of the window openings. The inner doorway is centered on the inside wall and has a painted wood surround. The oak door has a large plate-glass panel and decorative brass hardware. A doorbell button and plate are placed on the wall to the right of the door. Single window openings with two-over-one double-hung sash flank the doorway. In the original drawings these sash are shown as three-over-one.

The inner entrance door leads into a space that was originally an entrance vestibule but is now part of the larger central hall. Replacement wall lamps are placed on the side walls. The hall is dominated by a wood staircase with prominent square newels, square spindles, and curving treads at the bottom steps. The wood, which appears to be oak, has been refinished. Wood baseboards and ceiling cornices accent the walls, which are covered with wallpaper. The floor is wood. A replacement chandelier hangs from the plaster ceiling. A doorway to the left of the staircase at the rear of hall leads to a small washroom tucked beneath the stairs. A doorway to the right of the staircase leads to a back hallway.

The large room to the west of the central hall, now used as a conference and meeting room, was originally the living room. The wood surround of the opening conceals sliding pocket doors. The architectural features are similar to those in the central hall. The woodwork appears to be cherry. Wood baseboards and ceiling cornices accent the walls, which are covered with wallpaper. The ceiling is accented with wood beams. A stenciled border, visible in Wirth family photographs, originally edged the ceiling.³ The floor is wood. A replacement chandelier hangs from the plaster ceiling. The south wall is dominated by a fireplace with a painted wood-paneled chimneypiece installed in about 1947. Originally the fireplace mantel and surround were of reddish encaustic tile.⁴ The fireplace andirons are wrought iron. The diamond-paned casement windows to the right of the chimneypiece

³ The border can be seen in photographs from 1920 and 1943; copies are in the possession of the Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society. It is likely that a similar border was used in the dining room.

⁴ The backs of the surviving hearth tiles are imprinted "A. E. T. Co." Lamoreaux used similar tile for fireplaces in a number of other houses. The American Encaustic Tiling Company, founded in Zanesville, Ohio, in 1875, was one of the largest tile manufacturers in the world until the 1930s. For further information see: Catherine Hoover Voorsanger, "Dictionary of Architects, Artisans, Artists, and Manufacturers," in *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986).

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surmount wood paneling and a built-in wood bench. The west wall has two built-in bookcases with wood and leaded-glass doors that flank a pair of wood-and-glass doors opening onto the sunporch.

The large room to the east of the central hall, now used as a receptionist's office, was originally the dining room. The wood surround of the opening conceals sliding pocket doors. An angled three-sided bay projects outward on the north wall. Wood wainscoting to the base of the windows and ceiling cornices accent the walls, which are covered with wallpaper. The ceiling is accented with wood beams. The floor is wood. A replacement chandelier hangs from the plaster ceiling. A built-in oak sideboard is set on the west wall. The top section contains four leaded-glass doors with carved corbel brackets at the lower corners. The lower section has drawers with brass pulls. The recessed midsection is mirrored on three sides. A doorway to the right of the sideboard leads into the former kitchen and pantry area, which has been remodeled and reconfigured from its original appearance. This area now contains a variety of office equipment. The back hallway from the kitchen leads into the sunporch. The original back staircase has been removed and the space converted for use as a handicapped-access washroom. One window opening with diamond-pane casement sash is set in the west wall of the back hallway.

The sunporch, now used as office space, extends across the west end of the first story. It can be entered through either one of two door openings, one from the kitchen area at the north, or one from the living room at the south. Each opening contains two casement doors, each with twelve lights in each leaf. The doors are painted white on the sunporch side. The ceiling is covered with beaded wood paneling, like that seen in the entrance porch. Two lights with molded glass shades are suspended from the ceiling on brass chains. They are similar to those shown in a 1920 photograph.⁵ The wall panels, baseboards, window surrounds, and horizontal moldings above the windows are all wood, now painted white. These elements appear similar to those depicted in the 1920 photograph. The inner wall and the wall above the windows are now covered with wall fabric. The window openings are filled with metal-framed single-pane casement sash. When the house was constructed, the openings contained screens in the warm-weather months and storm windows at other times of year (similar to those on the entrance porch). A narrow door centered on the south wall led to the outdoor roof terrace. This has been removed and replaced by a wall panel. The floor, which is indicated as concrete on the original plans, is covered with carpeting.

Second Story: The main staircase in the center hall rises to a landing that has a wood bench set below a window opening with four diamond-paned casements set in the west wall. At the landing the staircase splits into two runs and continues to the second-story level. The wood banisters are set on square wood spindles. All the woodwork has been refinished.

The second floor contains a room in each corner. These are now used as offices, but originally these were bedrooms. The original plans call them "chambers" with the exception of the room in the northwest corner that is identified as the "boys' room." The center room on the east side, which now contains office equipment, is called

⁵ The photograph was taken at the twenty-fifth wedding anniversary celebration of Theodore and Leonie Wirth. A copy is in the possession of the Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society.

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the "sewing room." Both the sewing room and the room in the northeast corner (originally a bedroom used by the Menses, Mrs. Wirth's parents) have angled three-sided bays projecting outward. Theodore Wirth used the room in the southwest corner, and Leonie Wirth used the room in the southeast corner. All of these rooms have wood baseboards, window surrounds, and paneled doors, all of which have been painted white. The walls have been covered with vinyl fabric. The ceilings are plaster, and the floors are hardwood. Each room on the west side has a painted wood-and-glass door with a three-over-one panel leading to the sleeping porch. A bathroom is located between the Menses' bedroom and the boys' room. None of the fixtures or finishes are original.

The sleeping porch, where the boys customarily slept, extends across the west side of the house at the second-story level above the sunporch. It is now used as storage space. The painted wood baseboards, window surrounds, and beaded wood ceiling paneling are similar to those in the sunporch. Sawed wood brackets are placed in the upper corners of the window openings. The openings now contain aluminum-framed one-over-one sash. In the original drawings, the porch is shown as screened. The window opening with diamond-paned casements that lights the staircase landing is located on the east wall as are the doors from two of the bedrooms.

Third Story: A center staircase leads from the second-story hall to a landing (now blocked by the addition of a door); it then makes a dogleg turn and continues up to the third floor. The staircase has square newels and square spindles below the wood banisters. The finishes are painted instead of stained. A temporary wall has been inserted inside the upper banister to block easy access from the second floor. The three rooms on the third floor are used for storage. Originally two of them were bedrooms ("chambers"), presumably for the use of live-in servants. The rooms have simple painted woodwork, and the sloping ceilings reflect the profile of the roof.

Basement: The basement space is divided into two sections, reflecting the original uses of the building. The western section contains the spaces that served as the Administration Building. An entrance hall leads from the doorway on the north side into an office in the northwest corner and a large drafting room, now used for file storage space. In all three of these spaces, the walls are plaster, the floors are covered with vinyl tile, and the ceilings are drywall in the hall and drafting room, and acoustic tile in the office. Pipes, ductwork, fluorescent lights, and similar fittings have been inserted below the ceiling. The windows retain their original wood surrounds. The office was originally used by Theodore Wirth, and a photograph taken in about 1910 shows that the walls were covered with vertical wood paneling.⁶ It is likely that the walls of the drafting room were similarly paneled.

The central and eastern sections of the basement are divided into spaces for storage and service functions. Originally these served the needs of the household. A central hall contains a painted wood staircase that leads up to the back hallway on the first floor. A door has been installed at the top of the stairs to control access. The three rooms across the east front were a fruit cellar in the southeast corner, a storage room in the middle, and a vegetable cellar in the northeast corner. In the central section, a laundry room was on the north side and a drying room on the

⁶ A copy of the photograph is in the possession of the Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society.

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south side. Another staircase off the rear hall leads down to the cellar. The cellar was excavated only underneath the western section. It contains equipment for heating and cooling.

Conclusion

Aside from modifications that allow the building to be used for office space by the current tenant, the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association, the building is largely unchanged from the time (1910-1946) it was the home and administrative office of Theodore Wirth. In addition, the surrounding site largely retains the topography and landscape features from that period.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Theodore Wirth House/Administration Building is significant under Criterion B for its associations with Theodore Wirth, superintendent of the Minneapolis park system between 1906 and 1935 and superintendent emeritus until 1946. Wirth (1863-1949) gained national recognition for his work in the design, execution, and expansion of many aspects of the extensive Minneapolis park system and for his role in establishing and fostering several national organizations of park professionals. For these reasons, he made major contributions to the area of landscape architecture. Designed by local Minneapolis architect Lowell A. Lamoreaux of the firm of Long, Lamoreaux and Long, this building served both as Wirth's home from the time of its construction in 1910 until 1946 and as on-site administrative offices for Wirth and members of staff. While the entire park system itself can be associated with Wirth and his career,¹ this building and the surrounding site, which are situated in Lyndale Farmstead, one of those parks, and have been only minimally changed, provide the most tangible evidence of how he lived and worked during his long and distinguished career. The building, which is of statewide significance, is also part of the local contexts "Civic: Parks" and "South Minneapolis" and the statewide context "Urban Centers: 1870-1940."²

The Site

The Lyndale Farmstead, the park that contains the Wirth House/Administration Building, was originally part of the estate of William S. King, one of the founding members of the Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners. Lyndale Farmstead extends between 38th Street West on the north, Bryant Avenue South on the east, 40th Street West on the south, and Kings Highway on the west. The section north of the 39th Street that contained King's barns as well as the original house (1870) was acquired by the park board in 1899 for the storage of park equipment.³ The southern section was acquired in 1908.⁴ The site may be seen as the symbolic heart of the Minneapolis park system. The romantically landscaped Lakewood Cemetery, founded in 1871 over ten years prior to the establishment of the park system by many of the same people, is immediately to the west. Lyndale Park with its famous rose garden designed by Theodore Wirth, located to the northeast of Lake Harriet, is to the

¹ This connection has been cited in various context studies including Charlene K. Roise and Denis Gardner, "Making the City Itself A Work of Art: An Historical Context for the Grand Rounds, Minneapolis," December 1999, prepared by Hess, Roise and Company for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, 29.

² The building is also a Minneapolis Heritage Preservation site, designated in 1998.

³ Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners [hereafter MBPC], *Seventeenth Annual Report, 1899*, 702; "these [barns] and some ten acres of land about them." The King House itself was not included in this property transfer.

⁴ Theodore Wirth, *Minneapolis Park System, 1883-1944* (Minneapolis: Board of Park Commissioners, 1945), 168-169, says Thomas Lowry and James J. Hill, the mortgage holders, gave the property to the board in lieu of back taxes and tax payments; MBPC, *Forty-eighth Annual Report, 1930*, 140, says Lowry and Hill donated the land in May 1908. The *Twenty-fourth Annual Report, 1906*, 51, illustrates a plan for the entire farmstead between 39th and 40th Streets., "Superintendent's Residence" is shown with a hipped roof, perhaps slightly to the north of the as-built location.

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southwest. This provides the link to the Chain of Lakes and the Grand Rounds that Wirth did so much to refine and foster.⁵

The Building

Even though Wirth relocated to Minneapolis in 1906 on the condition that he be provided with a residence, similar to the residence he enjoyed in Hartford, Connecticut, the house/administration building was not constructed until 1910. Wirth claimed to have devised the original plan, which was rejected by his wife because it was all windows. Instead she came up with something more to her liking.⁶ In any case, the architect Lowell A. Lamoreaux of the Minneapolis firm of Long, Lamoreaux and Long was responsible for the final design, presumably taking the needs and desires of the Wirths into account.⁷ Lamoreaux's previous designs for the park system included the design of service buildings at Lyndale Farmstead (1908); a sketch for Gateway Park (1908); the park building at Powderhorn Park (1908); and the design of the pavilion at Camden (Webber) Park (1908).⁸

Lowell A. Lamoreaux (1861-1922), a resident of the Prospect Park neighborhood of Minneapolis, designed for himself one of the very first houses constructed in that section shortly after his graduation from the University of Minnesota in 1887. He then worked for Cass Gilbert and James Knox Taylor (Gilbert and Taylor) in Saint Paul for a short time. In association with James MacLeod in the late 1890s, Lamoreaux designed many notable residences for wealthy clients in the Kenwood, Linden Hills, Lowry Hill, and Whittier sections of Minneapolis, as well as other houses in Prospect Park. He practiced by himself between 1900 and 1908, then joined the firm of Long and Long, successor firm to Long and Kees. When he became a partner in 1909, the firm became Long, Lamoreaux, and Long. With MacLeod and in solo practice, Lamoreaux honed his skills as a designer of private residences. Stylistically they reflect a variety of trends including the Shingle Style, Colonial Revival, and Swiss Chalet. Characteristics of both the Colonial Revival and Swiss Chalet styles are evident in Lamoreaux's design for the Wirth House/Administration Building.

Long, Lamoreaux, and Long achieved success in the design of large institutional and commercial buildings in Minneapolis, including the Dyckman, Radisson, and Curtis Hotels, the Central Y.M.C.A., the Syndicate Building, the Palace Building, the Swedish and Eitel Hospitals, and the Hill and Boyd Transfer Company Warehouse.⁹

⁵ The rose garden was planned and begun in 1907. MBPC, *Twenty-fifth Annual Report, 1907*, 31.

⁶ Vivian Thorp, "Park Genius Sees Minneapolis Win Top Rank as Nation's Summer City on Plan He Fought For," *Minneapolis Times Tribune*, August 12, 1940, quoted Wirth: "I made the first suggestions for plans and they were really made that way, but when my wife saw them she was horrified. 'Why its nothing but doors and windows, there isn't a bit of wall space,' she said. So I just turned it over to her and she built it this way," he said, looking it over with brooding and satisfied eyes."

⁷ Permit filed July 22, 1910, B88623; C. P. Johnson and Son, builders; Board of Park Commissioners, owner; Long, Lamoreaux & Long, architect. See footnote 1.

⁸ Wirth, 169, 186; Cerny Associates Papers, Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota.

⁹ "L. A. Lamoreaux, Resident Half Century, Dead," *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 2, 1922; Marjorie Pearson, "Prospect Park, Minneapolis: An Historical Survey," October 2000, prepared for the Prospect Park and East River Road Improvement Association, 21-

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For the Wirths, Lamoreaux had the challenge of designing a building that served both as a residence and as a semi-public work space that was accessible from both inside and outside, yet removed enough not to intrude on the activities of the household. His task was made easier in part by the sloping site that allowed for the creation of an above-ground basement to house the administration functions. In addition, the site allowed ample light and a view of the parklands to the landscape architects, engineers, and Wirth himself, as they worked in the drafting room and the adjacent office area.

In the 1910 annual report on Lyndale Farmstead, Wirth noted:

The principal improvement carried out is the new Administration Building erected on a small wooded hill near the corner of Fortieth street and Bryant avenue. The building serves as the residence of the Superintendent, with an attached office and drafting room. The residence part provides twelve rooms. The offices are on a level with the basement and have a separate entrance from the north side. The heating plant is in a subbasement located under the office. The house being located on a hillside, plenty of light and air have been secured for the basement. The building is made of solid concrete to the first floor, and wood frame with rough cast cement finish from there. This residence makes it possible for your Superintendent to keep in closest touch with the administration plant and the work directed from there with the least loss of time, while the facilities of the offices will enable him to do a large amount of clerical and engineering work before and after the routine work of the day. The constant interruptions unavoidably encountered at the general office at all times, make it almost impossible to do justice to the large amount of preparatory work which your Superintendent should attend to.¹⁰

A photograph of the newly completed house was taken from the north, showing the entrance to the residence and the basement office facilities.¹¹ The building was completely wired for electricity.¹² Shortly after the Wirth family moved in, Wirth requested permission to keep a cow, a pony, and some chickens in one of the buildings at the

22; Jack El-Hai, *Lost Minnesota: Stories of Vanished Places* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Larry Millett, *Lost Twin Cities* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1992), 30, 254, 288-289; Cerny Associates Papers.

¹⁰ MBPC, *Twenty-eighth Annual Report, 1910*, 54, 56.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 57. While the color of the house cannot be judged in a black and white photograph, the tones make it appear darker than the cream color it has had for many years. However, photographs in the possession of the Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society from about ten years later depict a light-toned building.

¹² Specifications in Minneapolis Park Board files indicate the rooms by floor and name and the location and type of outlets. MBPC, *Proceedings, 1910*, June 20, 78, recommend the awarding of bids for the heating and electric wiring. The heating system which included a coal-fired steam boiler and radiators was installed by J. A. Shogren.

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Lyndale Farmstead for the use of the family. His request was approved in March.¹³ From his home and office in the Lyndale Farmstead, Wirth oversaw the construction and expansion of the Minneapolis park system. In 1945, he wrote:

In addition to serving as the Superintendent's residence, the building also contains office accommodations which through the many ensuing years of extensive expansion and construction, were much used by the engineering division, since such facilities in the main office at City Hall were sadly inadequate.¹⁴

Establishment of Minneapolis Parks from 1883 to 1905

Minneapolis had been slow to establish public parks. Colonel William S. King had offered to sell part of his farm near Lake Harriet to the city for a park in 1870 (a portion of this became part of Lyndale Farmstead), but the city was unwilling to spend the money. By the early 1880s King and George A. Pillsbury, among others, had taken over leadership of the Minneapolis Board of Trade, a commercial and civic group, that began to agitate for a board of park commissioners that would be separate from city government. The state legislature authorized a referendum to create a new entity that would have the authority to obtain land for park development and to issue bonds and levy a citywide tax for park purposes. Shortly after the board was established in 1883, it hired H. W. S. Cleveland, a noted landscape architect and contemporary of Frederick Law Olmsted, to plan a system of parks throughout the city. Cleveland laid out "in convincing and earnest language the many priceless natural and scenic attractions that were still unspoiled within the city limits, the acquisition of which he strongly advocated for park and parkway purposes."¹⁵

Cleveland looked at the river banks, Minnehaha Falls, Minnehaha Creek, and the areas around the existing lakes, and envisioned a system that would be linked by scenic landscaped parkways modeled after examples developed by Olmsted and Calvert Vaux in Brooklyn, New York, and elsewhere. The whole linked system was later christened the Grand Rounds and continued to be developed well into the twentieth century. Within the first two years, the board of park commissioners had acquired land for Central (later Loring) Park and twenty acres on the west bank of the Mississippi for Riverside Park. James Stinson donated land for the boulevard subsequently named after him in 1885, and portions of Hennepin Avenue and Lyndale Avenue North were landscaped and designated as boulevards. Park and parkway work was begun around Lake Harriet, Lake Calhoun, and Lake of the Isles and on the connections between them. The land for the creation of Minnehaha Park was purchased in 1887. Landowners along the banks of Minnehaha Creek donated land along the banks in 1889 and 1890, so a parkway

¹³ MBPC, *Proceedings, 1911*, January 6, 5; March 6, 39. A copy of a family photograph in the possession of the Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society, dating from about 1909, shows Theodore and Leonie Wirth in a horse-drawn sleigh, the three Wirth boys on a pony-drawn sled, and the family dog, posed in front of the Lamoreaux-designed service buildings.

¹⁴ Wirth, 169.

¹⁵ Wirth, 18-24, 26.

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could be created that linked Lake Harriet to Minnehaha Falls. Land for Columbia Park in north Minneapolis, was purchased in 1892.¹⁶

Much of this work was implemented under the direction of the first full-time superintendent, William Morse Berry, who had been hired by board president Charles Loring in 1885. At that time, Berry had spent ten years implementing Olmsted's plans for the South Park System in Chicago. He proved equally adept at putting Cleveland's ideas to work in Minneapolis: "Fully sympathizing with the views and tastes of Mr. Cleveland, Mr. Berry rapidly produced admirable results at very moderate cost to this city."¹⁷ The fame of the park system was well established when the second annual conference of the Park and Outdoor Art Association was held in Minneapolis in 1898.¹⁸ After Cleveland retired to Chicago in 1895, the board hired Boston landscape architect Warren Manning in 1899 to review the Minneapolis park system and make recommendations for further improvements. In his report, issued in January 1900, he called "for the enlargement of the system along lines previously suggested by Professor Cleveland, for still further extension beyond that proposed enlargement." Among his recommendations were the acquisition and the extension of parkways around Lake Calhoun and Cedar Lake, as well as the purchase of Lake Amelia (Nokomis) and Rice (Hiawatha) Lake. Because of an economic slowdown, this expansion campaign could not be put into place until after Berry's retirement in late 1905.¹⁹

Theodore Wirth: Background, Early Career, and Arrival in Minneapolis

Berry was succeeded by Theodore Wirth, who became the single most important professional figure in the realization of the Minneapolis park system. Wirth, born in 1863 in Winterthur, Switzerland, graduated from the equivalent of high school there. Because he wanted to become a gardener, he served a three-year apprenticeship with a private Swiss firm. Then he took a six-month engineering course at the *Technikum* in Winterthur. While working for one of the foremost landscape gardeners in Switzerland, he helped with the planning and execution of the grounds of the National Exhibition in Zurich in 1883. Then he spent two and a half years in London and one and a half years in Paris, furthering his experience in landscape work.²⁰ Seeking further opportunities, he immigrated to the United States, arriving in New York, on April 15, 1888. Shortly after his arrival he was hired as a gardener in the New York City Park Department, working in Central Park under Superintendent Samuel

¹⁶ Wirth, 46-64; Roise and Gardner, 7-12; Charlene K. Roise, "Minnehaha Parkway: An Assessment of Significance," September 1999, prepared by Hess, Roise and Company for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, 1-3.

¹⁷ [William W. Folwell,] "To the Honorable Board of Park Commissioners," handwritten notes, 1901, William Watts Folwell and Family Papers, Box 18, Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul.

¹⁸ Both Loring and Folwell were members. Roise and Gardner, 14

¹⁹ Cited in Roise and Gardner, note 54

²⁰ Theodore Wirth, Letter to Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., January 1, 1904, Wirth Family Manuscripts [hereafter WFM], Box 2, Minneapolis Collection, Minneapolis Public Library. In this letter, he writes that he wanted to become a gardener. He also writes: "My fundamental (sic) professional education is based on practical gardening, and same has been assisted by theoretical education and self-observation, during my professional life in latter years. I strongly believe that the landscape gardener or architect should be a good gardener."

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Parsons. Moving into the field of construction, he worked under J. F. Huss, director of construction; and became construction foreman, working on Morningside Park. He was fired in 1891 after three years because of a change in the city administration and local politics. Going into business for himself, he worked on private estates and cemetery landscape plans in New Jersey, Connecticut, along the Hudson, and on Long Island, New York. He also worked for a time on the construction of the Niagara Falls Park, a design of the Olmsted firm. While working on Long Island, he met F. G. Mense, superintendent of the George W. Perkins estate at Glen Cove. On June 17, 1895, Wirth married Leonie A. Mense. The following spring Wirth was appointed superintendent to the newly created Hartford, Conn. park commission, where he carried out the plans of landscape architects Olmsted and Eliot.²¹ Among Wirth's accomplishments in Hartford was the design and construction in 1903 of Elizabeth Park that contained the first municipal rose garden in the United States.²²

After Berry announced he would retire at the end of 1905, Charles Loring, still a member of the board of park commissioners, headed the committee that looked for a replacement. He invited Theodore Wirth to visit the city in June 1905, then offered him the position of superintendent. In his later years Wirth liked to recount his reaction:

When in 1905, Mr. C. M. Loring invited me to pay him a visit to consider the acceptance of my present position, I was at first disinclined to accept. It rained every day during my stay and everything looked uninviting except the people whom I met, and who were very kind to me. When I left here, I had in mind to reject the position offered, but on my long journey home, however, I constantly saw before me those lakes, the river gorge, Minnehaha Creek, the falls and glen, and the many other natural attractions and the possibilities for their betterment in the public service, new acquisitions, new creations, work among friendly people for a well-organized, non-political Board of Park Commissioners, By the time I reached home, I had gained a strong desire to accept. . . . It was the opportunity for new work that attracted me mostly.²³

Wirth sent a letter to Loring on July 4, 1905, stating that he would come to Minneapolis if he could be assured of certain conditions of employment, including a residence similar to that he had occupied in Hartford. Loring met his conditions, and on September 5, Wirth responded: "I have fought my battle of heart and mind and have come out of it, as I believe, victorious. Its gives me pleasure to inform you that I will come to Minneapolis at the time and under the conditions stated to you in my letter of proposal of last July. . . . I have come to the conclusion that

²¹ Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., John Charles Olmsted, and Charles Eliot, the son, stepson/nephew, and longtime associate respectively of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., headed the successor firm.

²² James F. Kiely, "Theodore Wirth—Pioneer in Park Planning," *Recreation*, April 1937, 1-4. The Wirth family occupied an official superintendent's residence in Elizabeth Park.

²³ Wirth, Letter to President and Members of the Board, June 19, 1935. Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Archives. The account is repeated in various later sources.

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I must follow the dictates of my ambition to enter a larger field of work, and that as a man I must stand by my proposition, which was accepted by you."²⁴

Soon thereafter it was reported in the local press that Wirth had resigned his position in Hartford and would be named superintendent of parks in Minneapolis. The *Journal* noted his achievements in Hartford, and commented approvingly: "Aside from being exceedingly well versed in the technical branch of his profession [he] is a man of progressive ideals. This is well attested by his annual reports and better still by his success at Hartford."²⁵ Further correspondence with Loring discussed various details and the need for Wirth to finish up in Hartford.²⁶

Wirth assumed his new duties as superintendent on January 10, 1906; initially he spent time with Berry, learning the details of the system. Christian Bossen, Wirth's clerk in Hartford, accompanied him to Minneapolis to serve in a similar position.²⁷ Apparently Leonie Wirth and their three sons, Theodore Rudolph, Conrad, and Walter, did not join Theodore Wirth until sometime in the spring.²⁸ The family moved into a rented house at 3935 Grand Avenue South.²⁹

Less than a month on the job, Wirth issued his first report to the board of park commissioners in which he recommended more playground and recreation spaces in the parks; removal of fences and unnecessary signs; systematic improvement of street trees on public thoroughfares; special forestry work in the parks; an enlarged nursery for the cultivation of planting materials; a relocated menagerie or none at all; establishment of a repair shop; a revised accounting system; and business methods to be followed in every department.³⁰

Wirth sent his impressions of Minneapolis and its parks to the president of the board of park commissioners in Hartford a few days later:

It has been my good fortune to make in the short time of my sojourn here many friends, especially so amongst the children. Some of the parks well adapted for winter sport, such as sleighing and skiing on hillsides, etc., have in the past, for no good reason, been denied for such purposes, and my first step was to throw them open to the children and aid them wherever I could to get all the

²⁴ Wirth, Letter to C. M. Loring, September 5, 1905, WFM.

²⁵ *Minneapolis Journal*, Sept. 13, 1905, 7.

²⁶ Wirth to Loring, September 12, 1905, October 18, 1905, November 9, 1905, November 15, 1905, WFM.

²⁷ Berry's term did not expire until January 22, 1906, and Wirth desired the overlap. See Wirth to Loring, November 15, 1905. The issue of the clerk discussed in the letter of October 18, 1905.

²⁸ Wirth to Loring, November 9, 1905. "I have been in correspondence with Mr. Ridgway regarding a house for me and he advised me to leave the renting of a house alone until towards spring . . . until I could secure a house myself. . . . I think I shall store my household goods away in my present house until I am ready to receive them, and let my family stay with Mrs. Wirth's parents until I am ready to settle in a suitable house."

²⁹ The house, designed in a modest "builder's Colonial Revival" style, is still there but altered.

³⁰ *Minneapolis Journal*, Feb. 6, 1906, 9.

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sport they want, and naturally those children are happy and likewise their parents. . . Minneapolis has the possibilities for one of the finest park systems in the country. The system in regard to the proper and equal distribution of parks all over the city is well conceived, and the opportunities offered by natural attractive sceneries have been well taken advantage of. Generally speaking, the entire system is however far from developed, and therein lies the attraction which brought me here.

My Commissioners are very anxious, now as the acquisition of necessary park lands is about completed, to begin improvements along permanent and modern lines, and I feel convinced that I will have the full support of the Board in my endeavors to promote the development of the parks and parkways and to make them as useful as possible to the public at large. . . .

I believe, however, that the time is coming when Minneapolis can in every respect occupy its proper place in this noble work amongst the many rival cities of this broad land of ours, and that as a fast growing Western City it will improve in park development as fast as any other city of the States.³¹

In the fall of 1906, the *Journal* published an editorial praising Wirth and his work on the parks:

The evidences that the park system, is receiving scientific treatment at the hands of the new superintendent multiply. The parks were never so well kept as they have been during the past summer. . . . In matters of detail Mr. Wirth has shown himself a master. He has not yet had the funds to undertake any extensive works of improvement, but if mastery of detail is any guarantee of success in large affairs, the superintendent will make good.³²

Minneapolis Parks under Wirth

Construction and Expansion

When Wirth arrived in Minneapolis, the park board had about 1,800 acres of land under its jurisdiction. By the time he retired in 1935, the number of acres had grown to about 5,200. But his initial goal was to improve what already existed. In 1907, responding to the tremendous interest in enhancing the Chain of Lakes, Wirth began dredging projects, shoreline building and rebuilding, and the excavation of channels between the lakes. When the channel between Lake Calhoun and Lake of the Isles was completed in 1911, the event was marked by a weeklong celebration.³³ On a smaller scale, Wirth laid out and planted the country's second rose garden in a public park, in this case Lyndale Park.³⁴

³¹ Wirth, Letter to William DeLoss Love, February 9, 1906, WFM.

³² *Minneapolis Journal*, Oct. 6, 1906, 4.

³³ Wirth, 94-96.

³⁴ MBPC, *Twenty-fifth Annual Report, 1907*, 31; *Twenty-sixth Annual Report, 1908*, 30.

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While initial park development had been focused on the southwestern part of the city, one of Wirth's goals was to extend the Grand Rounds northward through acquisition of land south and west of Cedar Lake, the construction of Cedar Lake Boulevard, and the creation of Glenwood Parkway and Glenwood-Camden Parkway. The latter was christened Victory Memorial Drive in 1919, in honor of those who had died in World War I. Glenwood Park was enlarged from its original 60 acres to 681 acres in several phases between 1907 and 1917. The park contained the city's first municipal golf course, complete with a club house, called the Chalet, designed by Magney and Tusler and built in 1922. Wirth credited the inspiration for the design to the small model of a Swiss chalet that he and his wife had purchased in Switzerland on their honeymoon in 1895.³⁵ Saint Anthony Boulevard extending from Columbia Park was officially opened in 1924.

In the southern part of Minneapolis, the swamplands of Lake Amelia and Rice Lake were acquired and transformed into Lake Nokomis and Lake Hiawatha through dredging and landscaping. Minnehaha Parkway was paved and developed, and work continued at Minnehaha Park. Work continued on the park around Lake Powderhorn and on the lake itself into the 1920s.³⁶

Extending the scope of park operations even further, Wirth championed and planned the acquisition, operation, and development of the Municipal Airport (later Wold-Chamberlain Field).³⁷

Recreation and Activities

Wirth has been called the "father of the Minneapolis recreation system." One of his first actions was to remove signs and allow children to play on the grass in the parks, as has been cited above. During 1906 gymnastic apparatus was installed at Riverside Park and Logan Park, swings and a merry-go-round at Minnehaha Park, and merry-go-rounds at Van Cleve Park and Farview Park. Playgrounds were established in parks throughout the city, and separate play fields were also created, many of them enabled by the Elwell Law of 1911. The law allowed for the issuance of bonds for park and playground acquisitions with the bonding secured in part by assessments against the affected districts. Wirth's arrival in Minneapolis coincided with the formation of the Playground Association of America, later the National Recreation Association. The Parade, adjacent to Central (later Loring) Park, was improved as a citywide athletic field which made possible the first city-wide athletic meet in 1909. The first director of recreation, who developed a year-round program, was employed in 1913. Among the activities sponsored by the board's recreation division were baseball, football, golf, ice hockey, skiing, canoeing, sailing,

³⁵ Wirth, 253. The chalet model is visible on top of one of the built-in bookcases in the Wirth family living room in a photograph taken in 1944; a copy of the photograph is in the possession of the Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society.

³⁶ Roise and Gardner, *Annual Report* citations in note 61; Wirth, 62, 90-92, 96-99, 122-123.

³⁷ MBPC, Testimonial, June 19, 1935, 3, Minneapolis Park Board Archives; Wirth, 297-316.

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swimming, hiking, festivals and exhibits, pageants, concerts, and community sings. All reinforced Wirth's motto that "parks are for people."³⁸

After the completion of the Wirth House and Administration Building in the fall of 1910, Wirth oversaw and planned the work of the park system from this location at the southwest corner of Lyndale Farmstead. He had a private office at the northwest corner of the basement immediately adjacent to the drafting room for the landscape architects, planners, and engineers under his supervision. This location also gave him ready access to the system's maintenance and horticultural operations that were located at the north end of Lyndale Farmstead. Various plans for Lyndale Farmstead itself were published in the board's annual reports.³⁹ The presence of a playground and an athletic field to the west and to the northeast of the building gave him ample opportunity to see the children of Minneapolis enjoying the park.

When Wirth retired on November 30, 1935, he was given the title of Superintendent Emeritus, and he and his wife were allowed to stay in the residence. As noted by members of the standing committee on finance; "Fortunately for this Board, Mr. Wirth's heart and soul is in park work; it has always been his hobby as well as his profession. It can be seen from the foregoing that relieved of his responsibilities as active Superintendent and supplied with the necessary facilities, he will be enabled to carry on in a leisurely fashion such studies for the benefit of this Board and for the park movement in general."⁴⁰ In fact Wirth devoted much of his time to writing his definitive history and study, *Minneapolis Park System, 1883-1944*.⁴¹

Leonie Wirth died on February 9, 1940, and was buried in Lakewood Cemetery. Later that year, Theodore Wirth was profiled by Vivian Thorp in the *Minneapolis Times Tribune*. She commented:

Theodore Wirth still lives in the lovely home on park board property . . . and it is still the heart of the park system. . . . It is very nice to think of Theodore Wirth sitting there on his hill, . . . looking back on those full years of fine work for us all; looking out on children and grown-ups made happier and healthier through his efforts, and looking forward to a still greater Minneapolis with more and more playgrounds and growing years of beauty.⁴²

³⁸ Wirth, 248; C. Ben Wright, "Minneapolis Parks and Recreation: A History of the Park and Recreation Board Since World War II," 17-18, available in Minneapolis Collection, Minneapolis Public Library; Kiely, 3.

³⁹ *Thirty-first Annual Report, 1914; Thirty-eighth Annual Report, 1920; Forty-second Annual Report, 1924.*

⁴⁰ Standing Committee on Finance, Letter to Board of Park Commissioners, April 17, 1935, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Archives.

⁴¹ In the foreword, 8, he wrote: "It is here in the quiet of my home office, in years gone by I accomplished most of my planning, design, and preparation of reports, that I am writing this retrospective story of our park system—renewing my knowledge of events preceding my association with the Board and enjoying my reminiscences of happenings during that association."

⁴² See note 12.

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About two years later he married his sister-in-law Juliette, who had never married and had lived with the Wirth family in Minneapolis for many years. Succumbing to the demands of health, Mr. and Mrs. Wirth moved out of the residence on November 1, 1946.⁴³

The Board thought it desirable that the building be retained for use as the Superintendent's Residence, so occupancy was offered to Charles Doell, who was then in that position.⁴⁴ Doell made a number of changes in the house to give it a more "colonial" appearance, most of which have been subsequently removed or reversed. These included changing window sash, adding exterior window shutters, modifying the front steps, and painting the interior woodwork.⁴⁵ The building remained in use as the Superintendent's Residence until 1996. It was converted to office use in 1997 and leased to the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association.

National Connections and Honors

Throughout his long career, Wirth fostered professionalism in various aspects of the park planning field as an active, and sometimes founding, member of numerous national organizations. These connections burnished his reputation and brought him many honors. The first of these organizations was the New England Association of Park Superintendents, founded in 1898. By 1904 its scope had expanded, and it was renamed the American Association of Park Superintendents. Wirth proudly hosted the group at its annual conference in Minneapolis in 1908.⁴⁶ The organization continued to grow, and in 1921 was renamed the American Institute of Park Executives and the American Park Society. Wirth was elected president of the organization in 1922 which presented him a gold medal in 1935. It established the quarterly publication *Parks and Recreation* in 1917, expanded to a bimonthly publication in 1921 and a monthly in 1930. This organization eventually merged with others to form the National Recreation and Park Association. Wirth was inducted into the organization's hall of fame in 1988, the first year such an honor was established.⁴⁷

Wirth's horticultural interests were reflected in the founding of the Twin City Florists' and Gardeners' Club and the Minnesota State Florists' Association. He was elected president of the Society of American Florists and Ornamental Horticulturists in 1913 when it held its annual meeting in Minneapolis. The society awarded Wirth its gold medal for his service to horticulture in 1931.⁴⁸

⁴³ Conrad L. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 7-8; *Sixty-fourth Annual Report, 1946*, 9; *Minneapolis Tribune*, Oct. 8, 1946

⁴⁴ Christian Bossen had immediately succeeded Wirth, but had himself retired in 1945. *Sixty-fourth Annual Report*.

⁴⁵ Photographs of the building during Doell's tenure are available in the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Archives.

⁴⁶ A photograph was taken of the attendees standing in front of Minnehaha Falls. A copy is in the possession of the Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society.

⁴⁷ *Minneapolis Tribune*, Aug. 23, 1922; Theodore Wirth, *The Beginnings of the American Institute of Park Executives* (Minneapolis: American Institute of Park Executives, 1957); C. Wirth, 9. Frederick Law Olmsted was also inducted into the hall of fame that year.

⁴⁸ Testimonial, 3.

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In 1921 Wirth was one of the founders of the National Conference of State Parks, along with Stephen T. Mather, director of the National Park Service; Horace Albright, superintendent of Yellowstone National Park; and John Barton Payne, Secretary of the Interior. The group honored Wirth at a dinner in 1930.⁴⁹ In 1933 the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society presented Wirth its Cornelius Amory Pugsley medal which was inscribed: "Theodore Wirth who developed the municipal park system of Minneapolis into one of the chief recreation centers of the Northwest."⁵⁰

Other medals and honors followed during his retirement years. The city of Hartford and the American Rose Society presented him medals in 1938 in recognition of the establishment of the first municipal rose garden in Elizabeth Park.⁵¹ That year Glenwood Park was renamed Theodore Wirth Park in recognition of his extensive contributions to the design of that park.⁵² In 1940 the Inter-Racial Council of Minneapolis awarded Wirth its civic service honor medal because "he has done more than any other individual to provide and establish in our city a growing system of parks and parkways which affords all people, rich and poor, convenient and wholesome places of rest and outdoor recreation; his courage and persistence, vision and wisdom, have gained for Minneapolis a world-wide reputation as a beautiful and delightful place in which to live; his contribution has been to all citizens, is typical of the unselfish spirit of democracy, and is a lasting monument to the American way of life."⁵³ The George Robert White Medal of Honor of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society was given to Wirth in 1946.⁵⁴

When Wirth announced his forthcoming move to California in October 1946, he was honored at two testimonial dinners. The first was held at the recently completed Calhoun Beach Club, with various politicians and members of civic organizations in attendance. The second hosted by members of the park board and park department heads was held at the golf chalet in Theodore Wirth Park.⁵⁵ Wirth returned the following summer for the dedication of the Peavey fountain in the rose garden at Lyndale Park. When asked how he liked California, he replied, "Very well, but there is nothing like this out there."⁵⁶

Wirth died in La Jolla, California, on January 29, 1949. Funeral services were held on February 4, at Lakewood Cemetery, Minneapolis, just west of the building where he lived and worked so many years, and he was buried next to Leonie Wirth. The park board designated that day as "Theodore Wirth Day" and attended the funeral as a group. It adopted a resolution that stated "His life's work, always in harmony with nature, is finished, but those

⁴⁹ C. Wirth, 39; *Minneapolis Tribune*, Sept. 27, 1930.

⁵⁰ A photograph of the medals Wirth received is in the possession of the Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society.

⁵¹ *Minneapolis Tribune*, June 21, 1938.

⁵² *Minneapolis Star*, Sept. 9, 1938; MBPC, Resolution, September 7, 1938, available in Minneapolis Park Board Archives.

⁵³ *Minneapolis Tribune*, November 21, 1940.

⁵⁴ Unidentified news clipping, January 11, 1946, in the possession of the Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society.

⁵⁵ *Minneapolis Star*, October 25, 1946; unidentified clippings in the possession of the Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society.

⁵⁶ Ruth Thompson, "Minnesota Memories," *Minneapolis Tribune*, December 1, 1947; a photograph of Wirth and Minneapolis mayor Hubert H. Humphrey was taken at the dedication.

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things of lasting beauty and benefit which our citizens will continue to enjoy are memorials in his honor that will live on with Minneapolis for years to come."⁵⁷ Tributes were paid to Wirth from around the country. Robert T. Everly, president of the American Institute of Park Executives wrote:

The death of Theodore Wirth brings a sense of deep loss to every one of the thousands of men and women who lead in the supervision and operation of the park and recreation systems of this country. During his many years of service to his own city of Minneapolis he shared generously with colleagues throughout America his boundless energy and broad vision of the place of public park and recreation agencies in the national economy and public welfare. . . . We, his close friends fellow-workers, recognize in his going that the whole country has lost a true public servant and a giant among men.⁵⁸

His son Conrad Wirth was particularly touched by the letter he received from his father's contemporary and fellow landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. (1870-1957), in which the younger Olmsted compared Theodore Wirth to his father:

I think he and my father had very much in common and which was, I believe, largely responsible for the great accomplishments of both of them in park work. It is something to which my attention has been strongly drawn of late . . . and something of much more profound importance in park work than is generally recognized. At bottom, it depends on a deep-seated, constant and compelling interest in and sympathy with, the people using the parks—on finding one's chief satisfaction in appreciative friendly observation and study of the ways in which those people actually use, and derive pleasure and benefit from any give park, and in helping guiding them by every available means to get the best values from their use of it, in the long run, that are made possible by the inherent characteristics of that particular park and by the widely various personal characteristics of the people themselves.

Unless a park man's interest in, and use of, the techniques of designing, constructing, and operating parks are dominated and motivated by such a fundamental and absorbing interest in the people who use the parks and in all the details of how they use them and how they can be induced to use them with greater benefit to themselves in the long run—as was the case with my father and yours—more technical skill in any or all of those phases of park work tends to become academic and sterile, except so far as that man is used as a subordinate technician-assistant by a master-mind who has that broader human interest in the people as such, and can to some degree inspire his

⁵⁷ MBPC, Resolution, February 2, 1949, available in Minneapolis Park Board Archives; *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 3, 1949.

⁵⁸ *Minneapolis Star*, Feb. 8, 1949.

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assistants with that same absorbing interest in them. Isn't that the most important thing that park-men ought to learn from your father's life work and that of my father?⁵⁹

Wirth's Legacy

Wirth's legacy was not only in the park systems and organizations he planned, executed, and fostered, but also in the people he influenced. The first of these was Christian A. Bossen, who had been his clerk in Hartford and became his assistant in Minneapolis. Bossen succeeded Wirth as superintendent, serving in the position until 1945. The regional athletic field at 28th Avenue South and 56th Street East, as well as a pathway in the bird sanctuary in Lyndale Park were named in Bossen's honor.⁶⁰

Another lasting legacy were the members of the Wirth family who followed in Theodore Wirth's footsteps. Two of his sons, Conrad and Walter, became "park men." They, along with their older brother Theodore Rudolph who went into the U.S. Navy, grew up in the house at Lyndale Farmstead. Conrad remembered the house as being on the outskirts of the city and described crossing fields to go to school. He and Walter learned gardening from their mother. His father gave him his first paid experience, trimming trees in the Minneapolis parks. Conrad, after studying landscape architecture at the University of Massachusetts and practicing in private firms, went on to join the National Park Service, where he had a long and illustrious career. He served as director between 1951 and 1964. Walter, after working in private practice joined the park system in Tulsa, Oklahoma; then became assistant superintendent and superintendent in New Haven, Connecticut; director of the Pennsylvania state parks; and superintendent of the Salem, Oregon, regional parks.⁶¹ Conrad's son, Theodore J., followed in his father's and grandfather's footsteps, becoming a landscape architect in his own right and designing parks both in the United States and abroad. Like their father, Conrad and Walter both received the Pugsley medal of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society and American Institute of Park Executive awards. Conrad and Theodore J. Wirth were named fellows of the American Society of Landscape Architects, and Theodore J. also served a term as president. Also like his father, Conrad was named to the Hall of Fame of the National Recreation and Park Association.⁶²

⁵⁹ Frederick Law Olmsted [Jr.], Letter to Conrad Wirth, February 4, 1949, copy in the possession of the Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society. Reprinted in C. Wirth, 21-22.

⁶⁰ *Minneapolis Tribune*, Jan. 21, 1956.

⁶¹ *Minneapolis Tribune* clipping, [Nov.?] 1951, in the possession of the Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society; C. Wirth, 6-12; 285, 352. Theodore Rudolph, while recovering from an injury, served for two years (1944-1946) as head of buildings and grounds at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, putting his family landscape background to work.

⁶² More information on the careers of members of the Wirth family is available from the Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society.

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Conclusion

The Theodore Wirth House/Administration Building stands today as the most significant building associated with the nationally renowned landscape architect and long-time superintendent of Minneapolis parks. Not only was it his home for thirty-six years (1910-1946), it also served as the workplace where he designed and supervised the expansion and execution of the city's widely acclaimed park system. For its associations with Wirth and his major contributions to the area of landscape architecture, the Theodore Wirth House/Administration Building is eligible for the National Register under Criterion B.

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Wirth, Theodore J. Interview by Marjorie Pearson, October 20, 2001.

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UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A:	15	476890	4975150
B:	15	476970	4975190
C:	15	477000	4975150
D:	15	477060	4975150
E:	15	477060	4975060
F:	15	476890	4975060

Verbal Boundary Description

The site is comprised of portions of Lots 7 and 8 of Block 6 of Remington's Third Addition. It is bounded by a line beginning at the northeastern corner of the intersection of Kings Highway and 40th Street West, extending easterly along the northern curb line of 40th Street West, northerly along the western curb line of Bryant Avenue South, westerly along the base of the hill adjacent to the athletic field, northerly along the pathway above the athletic field to the wall around the operations complex, southwesterly and westerly along the wall around the operations complex, and southerly along the eastern curb line of Kings Highway to the point of beginning, as shown on the attached map.

Boundary Justification

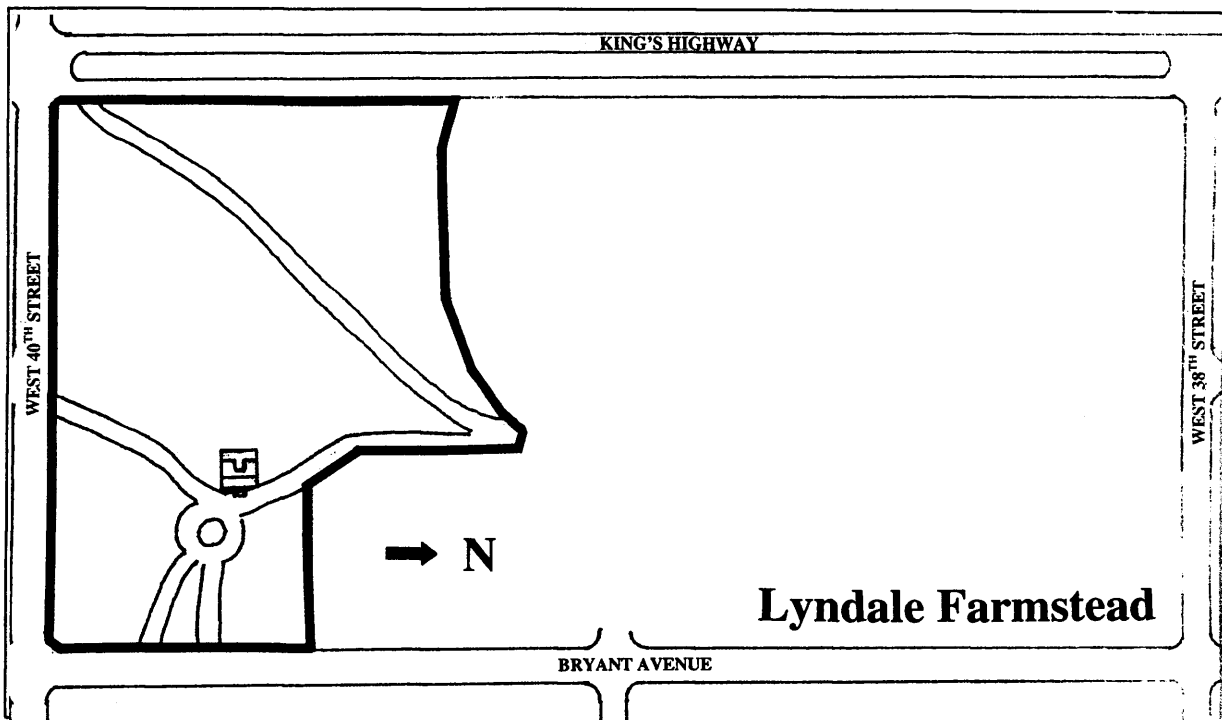
The site is based on the topography and historic landscape patterns that are associated with the Theodore Wirth House/Administration Building, as it was sited at the south end of Lyndale Farmstead. The topography of the portions of Lyndale Farmstead to the north of the site has been essentially retained, but the features and structures have been altered and replaced several times since 1910 (the year the house/administration building was constructed) and postdate the period of significance.

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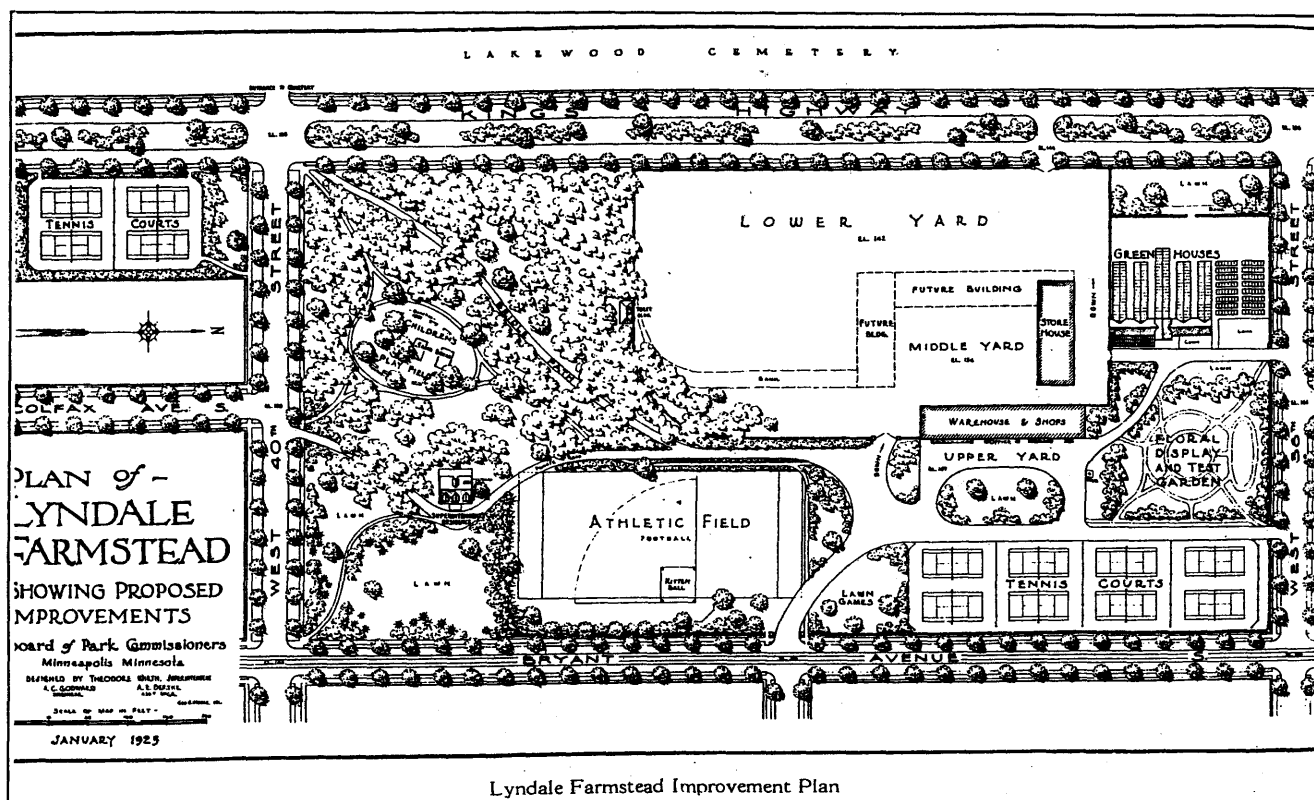
Site Map of the Theodore Wirth House/Administration Building, Lyndale Farmstead. Bold line outlines the site.

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Lyndale Farmstead Improvement Plan

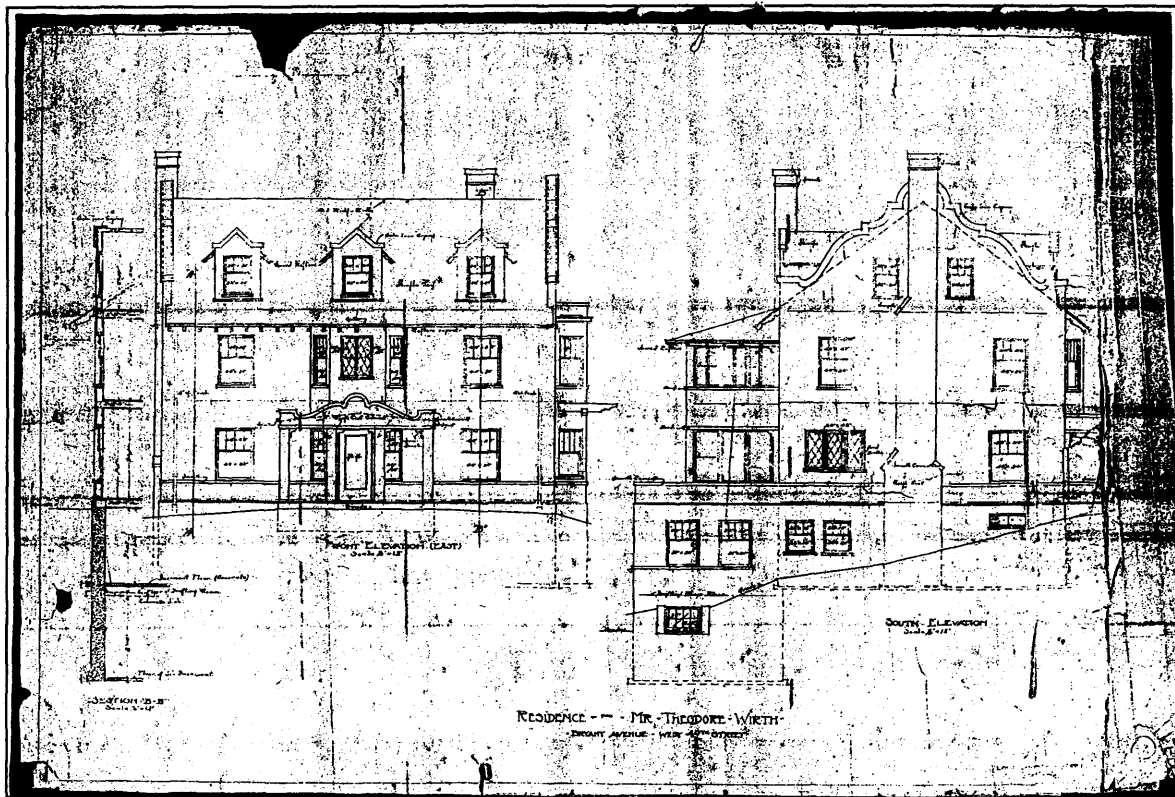
Proposed Plan of Lyndale Farmstead
From MBPC, Annual Report, 1925

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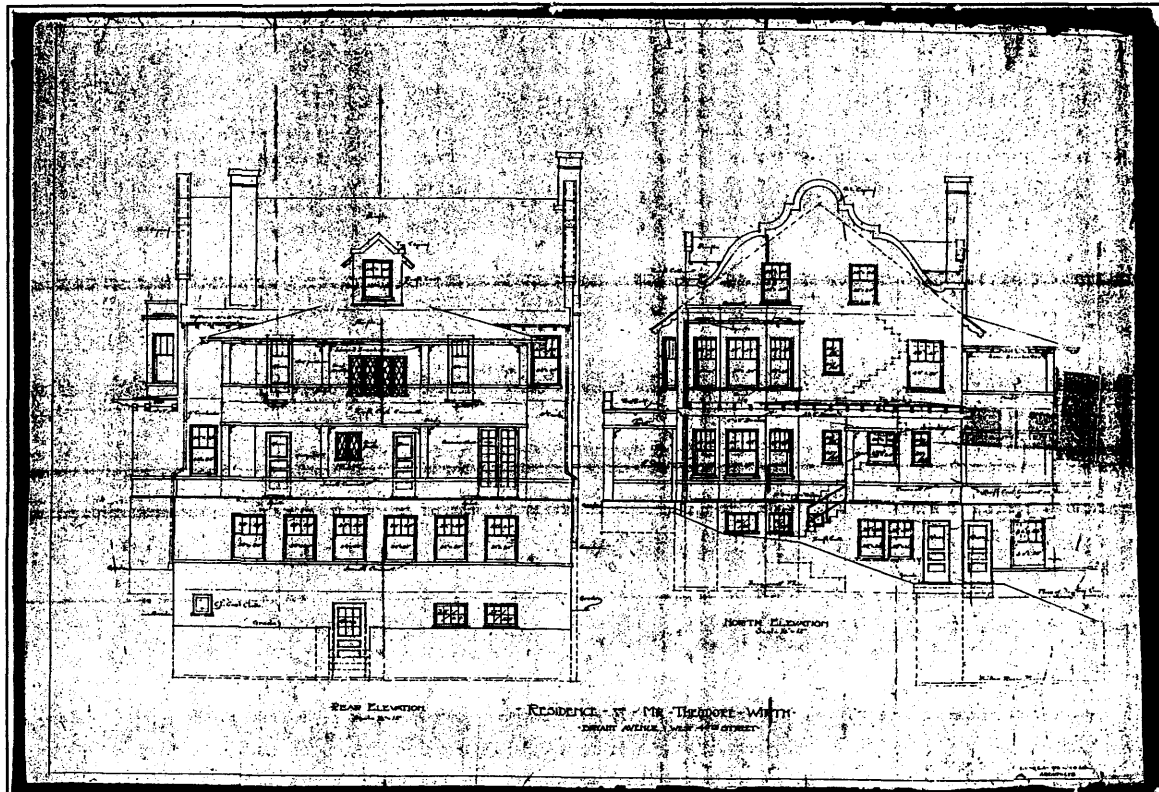
Theodore Wirth Residence, Drawings for Front and South Elevations
From Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Archives

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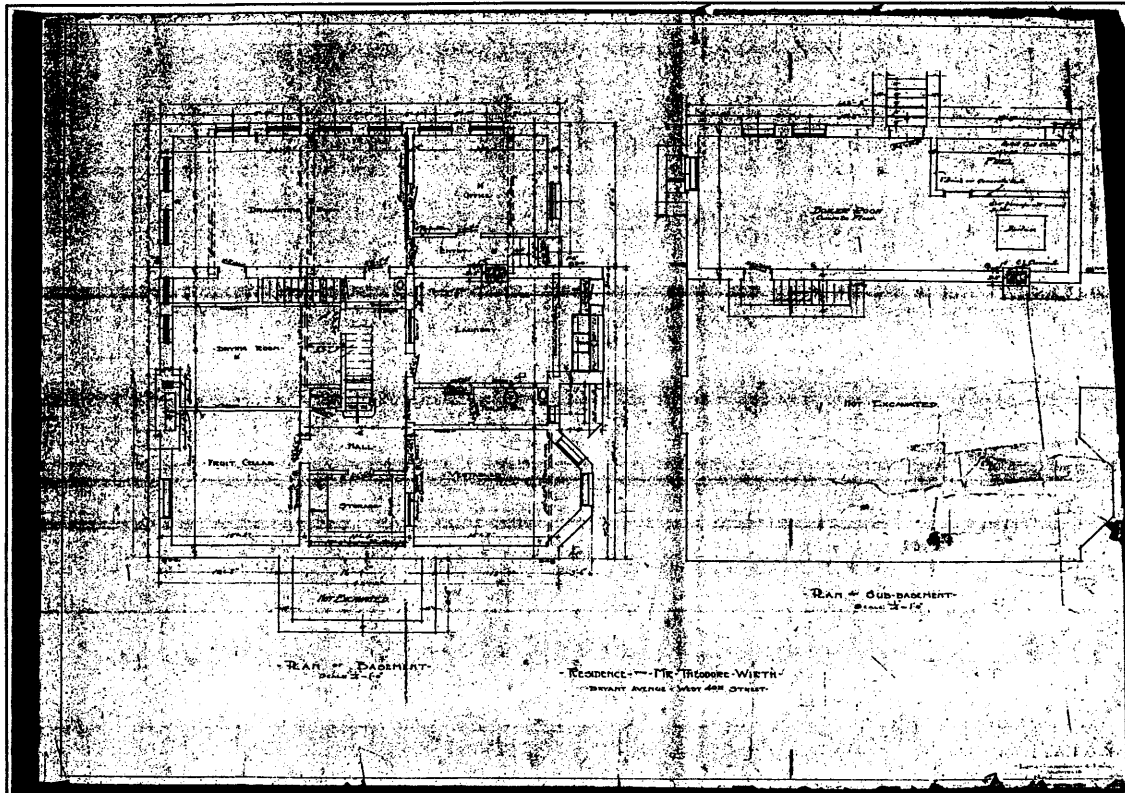
Theodore Wirth Residence, Drawings for Rear and North Elevations
From Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Archives

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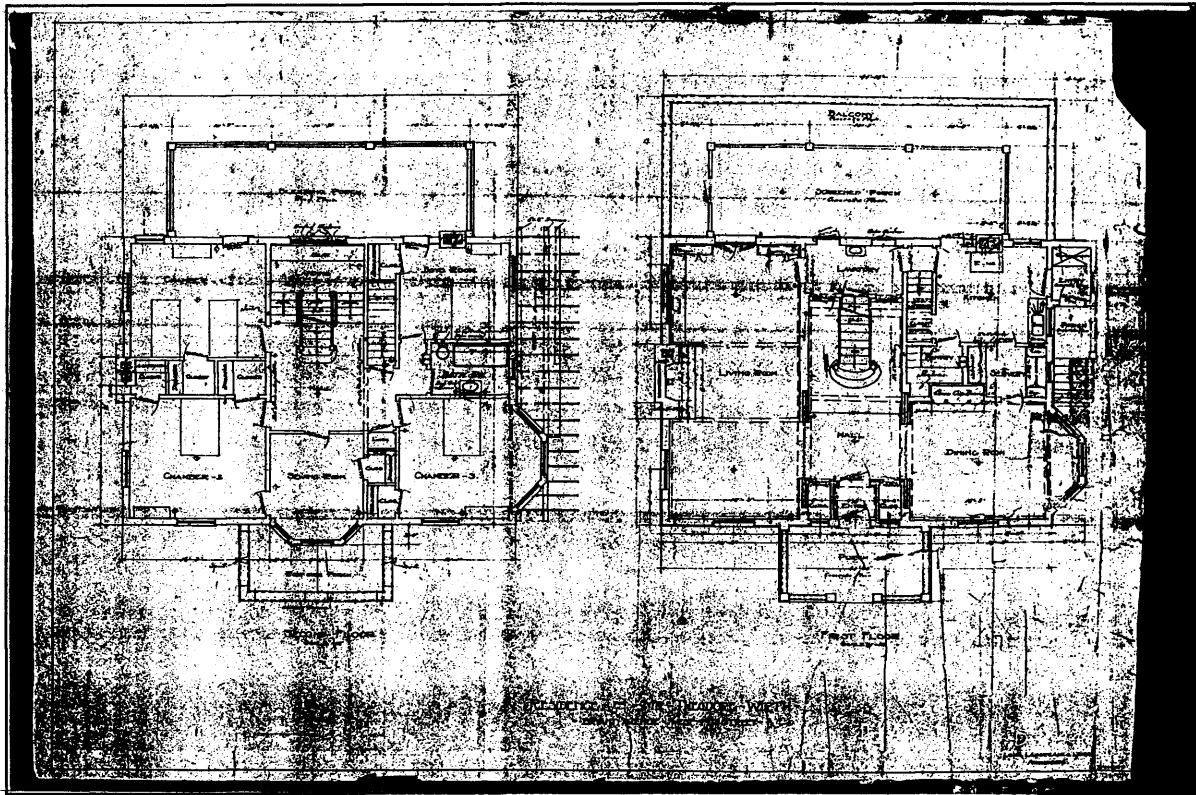
Theodore Wirth Residence, Plans of Basement and Sub-Basement
From Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Archives

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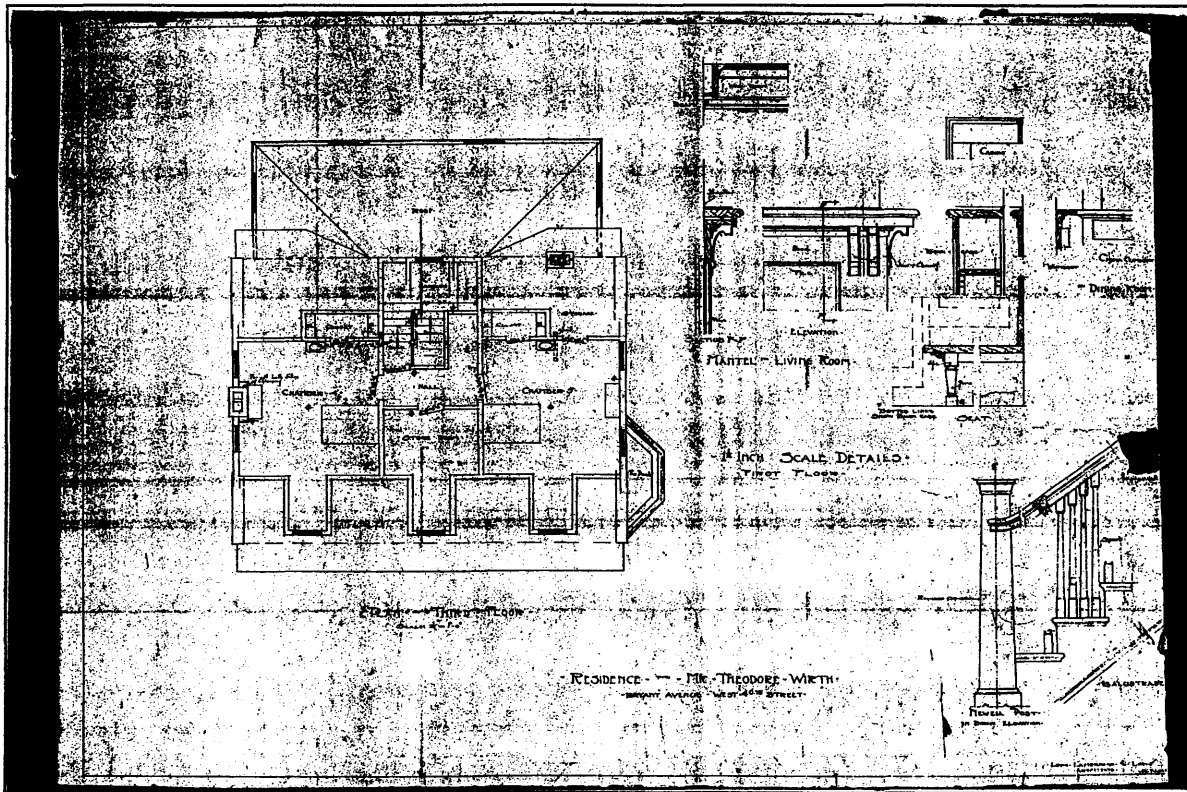
Theodore Wirth Residence, Plans of Second and First Floors
From Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Archives

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Theodore Wirth Residence, Plan of Third Floor and Details
From Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Archives

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Photographer: Marjorie Pearson, Hess, Roise and Company

Date: October 22 and 29, 2001

Negatives: Hess, Roise and Company, Minneapolis

1. Bryant Avenue façade. View to west.
2. West and south sides of building. View to northeast.
3. Basement and cellar levels on west side of building. View to east.
4. North and west side of building. View to southeast.
5. Basement-level drafting room looking towards Wirth's office. View to north.
6. Wirth's basement level office. View to north.
7. First-story living room with fireplace. View to southwest.
8. First-story dining room with sideboard. View to northwest.
9. First-story sunporch. View to south.
10. Second-story stairhall with staircase to third story. View to southwest.
11. Northeast corner of second-story sleeping porch with doorway leading to the boys' room. View to northeast.

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Theodore Wirth House/Administration Building with King House in background in about 1915. View to north.

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Theodore Wirth House, Bryant Avenue Façade, in 1920. View to northwest.
From Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society

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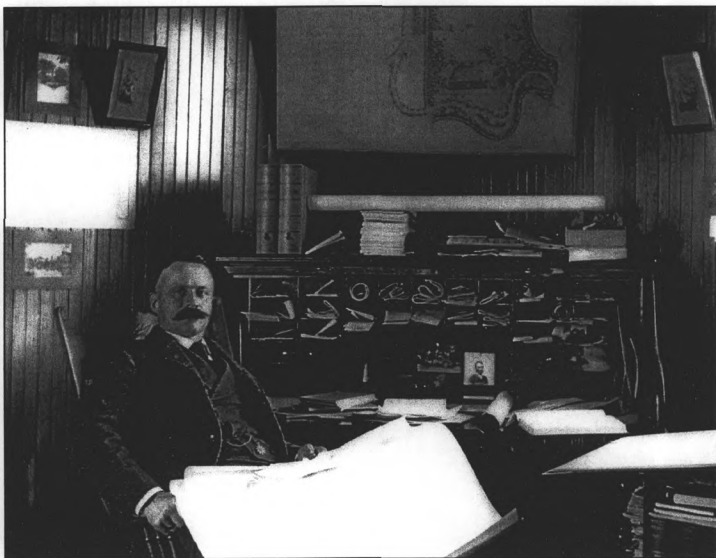
Front entrance of Wirth House with members of Wirth family in 1923. View to west.
From Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society

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Theodore Wirth in his office in about 1910. View to north.
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Living Room of the Wirth House in 1920. View to northeast.
From Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society

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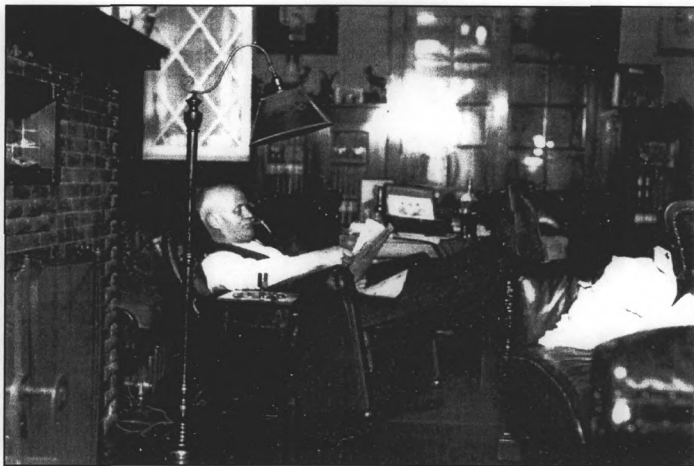
Wirth 25th Wedding Anniversary Celebration on the Sunporch in 1920. View to north.
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Theodore Wirth in Living Room showing original fireplace surround and mantelpiece in about 1935. View to west.

From Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society

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Theodore and Juliette Wirth in the Living Room in 1943. View to west.
From Minneapolis Parks Legacy Society

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