



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Minnesota State Archives

## IMMIGRATION BOARD

### An Inventory of Its Records

#### OVERVIEW OF THE RECORDS

<b>Agency:</b>	Minnesota State Board of Immigration.
<b>Series Title:</b>	Records.
<b>Dates:</b>	1881-1925.
<b>Abstract:</b>	Records of this board established to promote and encourage immigration to the state, including biennial reports, correspondence, and printed materials.
<b>Quantity:</b>	0.4 cu. ft. (1 Hollinger box).
<b>Location:</b>	116.A.3.8

#### ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY OF THE IMMIGRATION BOARD

The Board of Immigration was established in 1867 to encourage immigration to the state [Laws 1867 s28]. The board consisted of ex-officio members Governor William H. Marshall and Secretary of State Henry C. Rogers; a third member, who served as secretary, was appointed by the governor. Hans Mattson, a lawyer and Swedish immigrant, was the board's first secretary. The board membership was twice increased [Laws 1871 c50; Laws 1879 c76]. It ceased operation in 1886.

The board was re-created in 1907 as the Minnesota State Board of Immigration [Laws 1790 c267]. There were three ex-officio members, the governor, state auditor, and secretary of state, who appointed two members for two-year terms. The board members then selected a salaried commissioner of immigration. The duties of the board were generally to facilitate and encourage the immigration of persons of "good moral character" to the state and to assist immigrants on their way to Minnesota. In that capacity it acted primarily as an information service, collecting and disseminating information about Minnesota's agricultural, industrial, and commercial opportunities. It published books, brochures, pamphlets, and maps in English, French, German, Irish, Welsh, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish. Many of the publications advertised Minnesota public lands available for homesteading. It received an appropriation from the state, but also solicited contributions and endowments.

In 1925, the Conservation Department assumed the duties of the board and the board and the office of commissioner of immigration were abolished [Laws 1925 c246 art 4, 28].

List of Commissioners of Immigration: George Welsh, 1907-1911; H. J. Maxfield, 1912-1913; Fred D. Sherman, 1913-1920; J. S. Arenson, 1920-1921; Oscar H. Smith, 1921-1925.

## SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE RECORDS

The biennial reports (1908-1922) detail the activities and organization of the board and depict the state's climate, crops and livestock, population, schools and churches, and land available and land sold for homesteads; the correspondence (1911), of Commissioner George Welsh, includes a request for U. S. Senator Knute Nelson's aid in the resolution of disputed or questionable titles to Chippewa [Ojibwa] Indian lands; and the printed materials (1881-1925) relate to such topics as agriculture, manufacturing, the state's fiftieth anniversary, mining, industry, the Red River Valley, a series of promotional addresses on radio station WLAG, and the resources in each of the state's counties.

Most of the letters in the correspondence are photocopies substituted for deteriorated originals.

## RELATED MATERIALS

Publications produced by the board in English, French, German, Irish, Welsh, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish are in the Minnesota Historical Society library collections (cataloged separately).

## INDEX TERMS

*These records are indexed under the following headings in the catalog of the Minnesota Historical Society. Researchers desiring materials about related topics, persons or places should search the catalog using these headings.*

### Topics:

- Agriculture—Minnesota.
- Business.
- Churches—Minnesota.
- Community development.
- Counties—Minnesota.
- Government publicity—Minnesota.
- Homestead law—Minnesota.
- Iron mines and mining—Minnesota.
- Land titles—Registration and transfer—Minnesota.
- Livestock—Minnesota.
- Manufacturing industries—Minnesota.

Ojibwa Indians—Land tenure—Minnesota.  
Publicizing.  
Schools—Minnesota.

**Persons:**

Arenson, J. S.  
Marshall, William H.  
Mattson, Hans.  
Maxfield, H. J.  
Nelson, Knute, 1843-1923.  
Rogers, Henry C.  
Sherman, Fred D.  
Smith, Oscar H.  
Welsh, George.

**Places:**

Minnesota—Centennial celebrations, etc.  
Minnesota—Climate.  
Minnesota—Economic conditions.  
Minnesota—Emigration and immigration.  
Minnesota—Population.  
Red River Valley (Minn. and N.D.-Man.).

**Organizations:**

Minnesota. Dept. of Conservation.  
WLAG (Radio station : Minneapolis, Minn.).

**ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

**Preferred Citation:**

*[Indicate the cited volume and page or item and folder title here].* Minnesota State Board of Immigration. Records. Minnesota Historical Society. State Archives.  
*See the Chicago Manual of Style for additional examples.*

**Accession Information:**

Accession number(s): None; 262

**Processing Information:**

Catalog ID No.: 1703156 (history)  
Catalog ID No.: 1703817 (records)

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

*Note to Researchers: To request materials, please note both the location and box numbers shown below. Each file consists of one folder unless specified otherwise.*

### Location

116.A.3.8

Biennial reports, 1908-1922. 7 volumes in 1 folder.

Published biennial reports of the activities of the board pertaining to the promotion of immigration to the state, and the state's ability to attract immigrants. The reports include names of board members and the commissioner; information on the organization, function, and financial affairs of the board; and tables of data on the state's climate, crops and livestock, population, schools and churches, and land available and land sold for homesteads.

NOTE: Annual and biennial reports (1867-1886) are housed in the society's library collection (cataloged separately).

1908.

1910.

1912.

1914.

1916.

1918.

1922.

Correspondence, 1911. 12 items in 1 folder.

Correspondence of Commissioner George Welsh, primarily regarding the availability of homestead land in Minnesota, and disputed titles to land in two counties. There are three letters received (one in German) containing inquiries about homestead land; eight letters sent as replies to similar inquiries; and one letter (February 3) sent to U. S. Senator Knute Nelson requesting his aid in the resolution of disputed or questionable titles to Chippewa [Ojibwa] Indian lands in Becker and Mahnomen counties.

Printed materials, 1881-1925.

Arranged chronologically.

The Agricultural, Manufacturing, and Commercial Resources and Capabilities of Minnesota, 1881. 1 volume in folder.

Illustrated Minnesota: The Agricultural, Manufacturing, and Commercial Resources and Capabilities of Minnesota, 1881. 1 volume in folder.

**Location**

116.A.3.8

Minnesota's Fiftieth Anniversary, [ca. 1908]. 1 volume in folder.

Minnesota's Resources, [ca. 1910]. 1 volume in folder.

Written by Professor C. P. Bull, Secretary Minnesota Field Crop Breeder's Association, and Assistant Agriculturist at Minnesota State University.

Minnesota Conservation and Agricultural Development Congress, 1910. 1 volume in folder.

Contains addresses delivered at the congress held at the St. Paul Auditorium on March 16-19.

Minnesota: A Land of Opportunity for Agriculture, Horticulture, Live Stock, Manufactures, Mining, Education and Everything that Attracts the Immigrant, 1911. 1 volume in folder.

Minnesota by Counties: Facts and Figures About Each of Minnesota's Eighty-six Counties, [ca. 1916].

The Minnesota Red River Valley, [ca. 1924]. 1 pamphlet in folder.

Minnesota and Her Industries: A series of radio talks delivered over WLAG, the Twin City Radio Central, January 1924. 1 volume in folder.

Northwestern Minnesota: A Wonderful Agricultural Section, [ca. 1925].

Minnesota: Facts and Figures, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925. 4 booklets in 1 folder.