



Seymour B. Wurzler
1870-1963

Founder of the
Seymour B. Wurzler Bequest in

The New York Community Trust
909 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022

In 1963, the Will of Seymour B. Wurzler established the Seymour B. Wurzler Bequest, to be administered by the New York Community Trust for charitable purposes.

Seymour B. Wurzler was a man who lived his life modestly and circumspectly, and who worked long and faithfully for the same employer from boyhood through old age. He saved prudently, invested wisely, and spent carefully. And he made certain that after his death the fruits of a lifetime of labor and care would be used to help a wide variety of charitable institutions.

Seymour B. Wurzler was born in Brooklyn, New York, on December 18, 1870. He often joked that he was "a Christmas present" to his parents, Joseph and Christina Wurzler. Both of the elder Wurzlers had been born in Germany, had come to America as youngsters, and had settled in Brooklyn with their families.

Brooklyn in those days was a rural community, not yet a part of New York City. But that remoteness was soon to change, for the year of Seymour's birth was also the year that saw construction begin on the Brooklyn Bridge, linking Brooklyn and Manhattan. Simmy, as his family called him, was thirteen years old when Washington Roebling's famous and controversial bridge was completed. Like other young boys of his time, he grew up believing that Roebling was a "mad wizard". But that did not lessen his excitement on the sunny May

day in 1883 when President Chester Arthur arrived amid the clang of bells and the boom of cannon to make the first crossing of the bridge with New York Governor Grover Cleveland. With his family and friends, Simmy watched the spectacular display of fireworks during the evening. He then joined the throngs of people who lined up to pay a penny toll for the privilege of being among the first to walk high above the East River when the bridge was opened to the public at midnight.

That same year a young man named Charles Ebbets took a job as bookkeeper for an obscure Brooklyn baseball club. The bookkeeper eventually became the owner of the club, and built a baseball park for his team in what were then the wilds of Brooklyn. As Ebbets Field and the "Trolley Dodgers" of Flatbush Avenue became part of the Brooklyn scene, Simmy Wurzler faithfully followed the fortunes of the team and enjoyed his home town's incredible stories about "Uncle Robbie," the team's legendary manager, Wilbert Robinson. Simmy lived to see the name shortened to the *Dodgers*, and eventually to watch his ball club become world champions.

Simmy was a true Brooklynite, and he did not often leave his native borough. Why should he, when there was so much happening right in Brooklyn?

Soon after Joseph Wurzler had settled in his adopted country, he had taken a job with the newly-established Dime Savings Bank. When Simmy was sixteen years old, he followed in his father's footsteps and quickly earned a reputation as a loyal and well-disciplined worker at the same bank.

When New York lay immobilized and virtually isolated after the three-day Great Blizzard of 1888 that produced the deepest snows in its history, the slight, wiry 18-year-old was one of three Dime employees who managed to get to work. He delighted in telling how he had tunneled through drifts well over his head, and

how he had helped to shovel the accumulation away from the door of the bank so that depositors could come in. There were few who made the effort, but Simmy took great satisfaction in knowing that he was there to serve any who might come.

As a teller, the position he held during most of his career, Sim took the financial transactions of each Dime depositor very much to heart. This was particularly true during the Depression, when apple-sellers hoped for customers on the corner outside the bank and when lines for the soup kitchen wound past his door. He fretted when one of the bank's depositors came in to withdraw funds. If the amount exceeded two hundred dollars, Sim would first count out the bills himself and then take the money to another employee for verification. Being a cautious man, he didn't quite trust himself in dispensing such a large amount. Being a saver himself, he preferred to see deposits, not withdrawals, made.

As a young man, Sim Wurzler married Elizabeth Kusch, also a Brooklynite of German descent and eight years his junior. They spent many years of quiet, pleasant life together before Elizabeth died suddenly on August 30, 1921, at the age of 43.

Two years after his wife's death, Seymour's mother died, followed a year and a half later by the death of his father. Sim passed a number of lonely years before he was fortunate enough to meet Louise Boelger Anderson, the attractive widow of a Brooklyn physician. Soon they were married.

Louise Wurzler came from a well-to-do family. Her sister recalled that Louise, an independent-minded girl, had once been offered a "position" and wanted very much to accept. But their father had been adamant in his refusal. "None of my girls will go to work," he said. And so Louise had reluctantly remained at home like other well-bred young ladies of her day.

As mistress of the Wurzler household, Louise won a reputation as an elegant cook and an excellent hostess among brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews — both her own and her husband's — who were frequent guests there. Relatives recall her as "a very quiet, refined person" and remember admiring the lovely home that was in perfect accord with the personality of its owners: always in modest good taste.

The Wurzlers enjoyed short trips together, often spending brief summer vacations at the Indian Queen Hotel in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. Near the end of his years of service at the Dime Savings, the bank and some of his fellow employees sent Sim and Louise, with Louise's 88-year-old mother, on an expense-paid trip to Yellowstone National Park. But, typically, the habits of a lifetime were too strong. Before the vacation was over, Sim had taken his family home to Brooklyn and was back at work in the teller's cage for the rest of his holiday.

On July 1, 1938, Seymour Wurzler received a fond and respectful send-off from the bank. An elaborate banquet celebrated the occasion. Friends and co-workers of a lifetime, and some of the bank's highest officers, came to pay tribute to the faithful employee. As his beaming wife looked on, glowing testimonials were rendered to Sim's years of service. The story of the Blizzard of '88 was told one more time. Then came the climax of the banquet: the presentation of the traditional gold watch. That watch was an object of great pride for the rest of his life. At the time of his retirement, Sim was sixty-seven years old, and he had worked at the Dime for fifty-one years.

Louise Wurzler died on December 14, 1947, at the age of 74. Except for the cat which he kept for company, Sim, then 77 years old, was very much alone. His life was simple, determined by old patterns. There were weekly automobile trips to Louise's grave in the Lutheran

Cemetery in Queens. In summer he went occasionally to Vermont, always returning with cans of maple syrup for his friends. He was a frequent visitor at Dime Savings, where he ate lunch in the bank's dining room and caught up with the news from his former colleagues. He stopped in often to see his wife's sister and brother, who still occupied their grand old twelve-room family homestead in Brooklyn. He called on his neighbor, a lawyer, for advice and counsel.

Nephews and nieces visited him and kept an eye on him. They saw him gradually become more of a recluse and less able to maintain his home and care for himself, and eventually they arranged for their uncle to enter a nursing home. He was 92 years old when he died in North Tarrytown, New York, just after the beginning of the new year, January 2, 1963. His estate was divided among a number of charities whose services he admired. Most of them were in his native Brooklyn, including the Industrial Home for the Blind, the House of St. Giles the Cripple, the Brooklyn Chapter of the Salvation Army, and Christ Church, Clinton and Kane Streets, where the bequest was in memory of Louise E. Wurzler. At the same time, his carefully-thought-out plans included establishing the Seymour B. Wurzler Bequest in the New York Community Trust so that he could, in effect, continue to serve his fellow man through the years to come.



The New York Community Trust provides centralized management service, on a non-profit basis, for individual foundations and charitable trust funds.

New York's major banks serve as trustees. Trustee for the Seymour B. Wurzler Bequest is the First National City Bank.