

Edwin DeTurck Bechtel Papers (PP)

Archives, The LuEsther T. Mertz Library
The New York Botanical Garden
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- Collectors:** Bechtel, Edwin DeTurck, 1880-1957.
- Title:** Edwin DeTurck Bechtel Papers (PP)
- Dates:** 1930-1971.
- Dates:** bulk, 1950-1959.
- Abstract:** Manuscripts, correspondence, speeches, articles, reprints and scrapbooks. Also included are photographs and 35 mm slides.
- Quantity:** 3 boxes; 1.2 linear feet.
- Call Phrase:** Edwin DeTurck Bechtel, (PP)
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Biography of Edwin DeTurck Bechtel

Edwin DeTurck Bechtel, attorney, authority and scholar of rose culture, and an art collector, was born in Bechtelsville, Pennsylvania, a town founded by his ancestors, on June 19, 1880. He attended Harvard University where he received a B.A. in 1903, an M.A. in 1904, and a law degree in 1908. From 1911 to 1948 he practiced law with the firm of

Carter, Ledyard and Milburn. In 1929 Bechtel married Louise Seaman, founder of Macmillan's children's department and editor of "Books for Boys and Girls" at The New York Herald Tribune. They had homes in Manhattan and Bedford Four Corners in Westchester County, a 32-acre estate where they established a rose garden of more than 700 plants and 300 varieties.

Bechtel wrote widely on a variety of subjects. As a respected rosarian, he became known through his publications and speeches on roses and his official organizational positions. Bechtel was president and board chairman of the New York Botanical Garden, chairman of the Horticultural Society of New York, and the International Flower Show. He was also the winner of the Jane Righter Rose Medal of the Garden Clubs of America in 1953. Before he died on July 4, 1957 at his home in Bedford, he was planning a book entitled "The Pursuit of the Rose." An art collector, he wrote on the works of Honore Daumier and the 17th century French graphic artist, Jacques Callot. He left his collection of Callot and Daumier prints to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The Bechtel Rose Garden at the New York Botanical Garden was dedicated in his memory in 1972. On a level terrace just north of the Conservatory on two-thirds of an acre, the formal garden included four major types of roses: hybrid tea, floribunda, climbers and old garden roses. In 1958 Bechtel Lake at the Westmoreland Sanctuary in Bedford was named in his honor.

In 1960 Louise Bechtel (1894-1985) wrote a memoir of her husband, *The Boy with the Star Lantern*, an edition of five hundred copies, published privately; she also wrote a monograph *About Bedford Corners and Our Home in One Corner* (Lunenburg, Vt., Stinehour Press, 1963). Both publications are in the collection of the New York Botanical Garden Library.