
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

Series 2: “ You have nothing to fear but fear itself.” FDR
and the New Deal

File No. 1233

1939 July 23

Transferring Deed for Franklin D. Roosevelt
Library to United States Government

The President dictated the attached on Sunday, July 23, 1939, and read from it for the Newsreels at the Ceremony in connection with the signing of the deed transferring the property to the U.S. Government. On this property the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library is to be built.

(The Reading Copy was lost-this is the 1st and only carbon)

Today marks the first step, under the Act of Congress, of starting the building to hold certain historical collections, which I have made over a period of forty years, including my personal papers as State Senator, as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, as Governor of the State of New York and as President. The building is being erected under the supervision of the Archivist of the United States and a Committee of distinguished scholars, but it is being paid for solely by private subscription.

May I add that in accordance with my statement of two years ago, the money which I received from the publication of introductions and notes to the volumes of my Papers, already published, has been and is being given in whole to this building fund, after, of course, deducting the income tax thereon that is being paid to the Federal Government. The same is being done by my friend, Judge Rosenman, who edited the Papers. It is unnecessary for me to say this, and I do it only because certain misrepresentations have been made.

The new building will be at the far end of an eighteen acre field, with a new driveway to it from the famous old New York to Albany Post Road, which is one of the most traveled highways in the United States. The field is five miles from Poughkeepsie, a City of forty thousand inhabitants, and one and a half miles from Hyde Park village.

The building itself will be constructed of the usual Dutchess County weathered fieldstone, taken from old stone walls, and will be one and a half stories in height.

When we go into the courtyard, which faces the highway, we will enter a hallway and proceed from it to an Exhibition Hall. It is the plan of the Trustees to place in this Hall various models, paintings and other objects of interest which have been given to me over a long period of years. It will also contain a large part of the books on many subjects, many of them inscribed by the authors. These, too, have been given to me over many years.

On the right of the main Exhibition Hall will be a small room for students who come to the building to examine the documentary material for the purpose of making original historical research. On the left will be a small room for me to work in, assisting the cataloguing and maintenance of the collections.

On the left of the main hall, a door leads into the Naval Collections Exhibition Room. Here will be placed most of the United States Navy ship models, paintings, engravings, relics and books. I have been constantly at work in forming this collection since my freshman year at college, and it has become today one of the major collections relating to the United States Navy.

Continuing through this room we come to a small room which will be devoted to manuscripts and books that relate to the history of Dutchess County and the Hudson River Valley. It is hoped that this particular collection will be maintained by the Dutchess County Historical Society.

In the right wing of the building, as we go into the main hall, will be the stack room -- a two story

permanent filing place for manuscripts. To date there are more than six million of them, and one of the particular tasks of the Archivist in the years to come will be to classify them, eliminate duplicates and keep them in constant repair.

In the basement will be several work shops and also a photograph room. Within the past few years a new device called a microfilm has been invented so ~~that~~ ^{if} any public or college library wants copies of any of the papers in this library, they can be photographed on a microfilm, with a saving of a great amount of space, and sent to the applying library and read either through a magnifier or re-photographed to full size.

It has been the conclusion of the Committee of scholars who have given me their advice on this whole project that in these modern days it is advisable for us not to put all our historic eggs into one basket. There is too much danger in modern warfare that a few well-directed bombs might destroy a single, great, national repository of historic source material. They, therefore, welcome a partial distribution of such original material through the different parts of the Nation. This spreads

the risk -- and, incidentally, will probably result in an increased public interest in historic documents.

In the background of this picture you will see one of three very old oak trees. They are estimated to be three hundred years old. That was sixty years before white settlers came into Dutchess County. It means also that these trees, spreading their great branches close to the ground, grew up under field conditions, and it may, therefore, be safely assumed that this field was the site of an Indian village and that here they cultivated their corn.

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