

ROOSEVELT, FRANKLIN D.

PAPERS AS PRESIDENT

PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL FILE, 1933-1945

(NUCMC 75-562)

Accession Nos.: 41-51, 41-52, 41-53, 41-56, 41-57, 41-62, 41-65,
41-66, 41-72, 41-73, 42-23, 42-24, 42-26, 42-36,
42-54, 42-55, 42-100, 42-113, 42-120, 42-141,
42-194, 42-195, 42-235, 42-236, 42-313, 42-338,
43-78, 43-79, 43-118, 43-157, 43-171, 43-195,
43-197, 43-215, 43-216, 43-217, 43-218, 43-250,
44-18, 44-54, 44-76, 44-114, 44-115, 44-118,
44-119, 45-22, 45-51, 45-52, 45-56, 45-72, 45-73,
45-79, 46-62, 46-99, 59-6, 64-18, 65-9

These papers were donated to the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt began shipping Presidential materials to the Library as early as August 1940 but the bulk of the collection was received from his estate in December 1947. President Roosevelt donated his copyright interest in these papers to the United States Government; writings of other individuals are subject to copyright restrictions under Title 17 of the U.S. Code. Copyrights in the writings of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt in the papers have been retained. Information concerning them should be sought from her literary executor, Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.

Quantity: 623 linear feet (approximately 1,246,000 pages)

Restrictions: Material that might be used to harass, embarrass, or injure living individuals has been closed.

Related Material: The papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt as President are divided into five major groups: the Alphabetical File, the Official File, the President's Personal File, the President's Secretary's File, and the Map Room Papers. Most of the Library's other collections will also contain related material on given topics.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, as administrative head of the Executive branch of the United States Government, had the assistance of several secretaries, administrative assistants and special assistants as well as a personal secretary. During the Roosevelt administration, the White House received an average of 3,000 letters a day. Mail addressed to the White House was routed by the Assistant Executive Clerk either to the President, through his personal secretary; to an assistant with a specific area of responsibility; to the Office of the Chief of Correspondence for the preparation of a routine reply; or, if appropriate, routinely referred to another government agency for action. The correspondence which went to the President directly was either answered personally by him or sent to another agency for the preparation of a draft reply. Occasionally Roosevelt would merely initial his approval on an original letter and return it to its sender.

After the White House mail had been answered, it was routed to the Office of the Chief of Files for filing. At this time a record was also kept of all correspondence referred elsewhere. This White House office maintained what was known as the White House Central Files; the filing system used was that originally developed in 1906 during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt.

The Central Files were divided into four categories of material. The Alphabetical File contained copies of letters of acknowledgment for mail referred elsewhere, copies of forwarding letters, lists of forwarded mail, abstracts of documents placed in the other filing categories, as well as some routine correspondence. Material in this file was arranged alphabetically by correspondent or subject.

The Official File was intended to consist of correspondence and other material related to the policy-making activities of the President. It includes correspondence, memoranda, and reports from government officials and other public and private individuals. Within this group of papers are files on government departments and agencies; subjects of concern to the President; important organizations and individuals; as well as files on less important persons or subjects. These files are arranged numerically by subject or individual concerned.

The President's Personal File was set up to contain correspondence concerned with matters in which the President took a personal interest. It includes files on gifts received by the President, birthday and holiday greetings, honorary memberships, fraternal organizations and philanthropic

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societies as well as files on personal friends and political associates of the President. This file is also arranged numerically by subject or individual concerned.

The fourth group of papers in the Central Files was known as the Confidential File. It contained material similar to that found in the other filing categories which had been designated confidential by the President or one of his secretaries or assistants. It was arranged alphabetically by subject.

The boundaries between these file groupings were often vague and similar material can be found in both the Official File and the President's Personal File. In many cases both groups of papers will contain files on a particular subject or individual. Researchers should thus consult both files to be assured of seeing all the material on their topic.

To facilitate the use of the Central Files, the Office of the Chief of Files prepared an index of important individuals and subjects and also adopted a system of inserting cross reference sheets in other related files throughout the four groups of papers. When correspondence was received by the Office a classifier determined the appropriate file for the original document and so marked the covering letter. Notations were also made on the document to indicate the other files where abstracts of that particular correspondence would be placed. The correspondence then passed to a typist for the preparation of the required number of abstracts. Subsequently, filing clerks would file both the original papers and the abstracts.

With a few exceptions, all of the mail received at the White House (or a record thereof) would thus end up in the Central Files. Occasionally large amounts of correspondence concerning a particular subject would be referred to another agency without a record being kept. Secretaries and administrative assistants might also retain small amounts of correspondence in their own files. The President's personal secretary, while sending ordinary correspondence to the Central Files, also maintained a file of documents deemed special and confidential by the President.

The correspondence retained by the personal secretary was arranged alphabetically by subject into a Diplomatic File, containing confidential reports from American representatives

abroad; a Department File, containing material from various government agencies; a Famous People File; a Secret File with correspondence from individuals such as Winston S. Churchill and Joseph Stalin; a Special Studies File; and a General File. This material plus the Confidential File of the Central Files has been incorporated into what is known as the President's Secretary's File.

After the United States' entry into World War II, a White House Map Room was established in January 1942 under the supervision of the President's Naval Aide. This office also maintained files, arranged by subject, which are now known as the Map Room Papers. Included are wartime messages sent and received by the President, including those exchanged with Churchill, Stalin, and Chiang Kai-shek, as well as a number of documents sent by the War and Navy Departments for the President's information.

President Roosevelt began shipping those portions of his White House files which were not in current use to the Roosevelt Library in August 1940. Additional accessions were received throughout his presidency. After his death, the remainder of the Central Files were received from his estate in December 1947. Security classified material in the President's Secretary's File and the Map Room Papers was received from storage in the National Archives in November 1951.

Anyone wishing more information concerning the record-keeping practices of the White House may consult Fred W. Shipman's "Report on the White House Executive Office," available in the Research Room.

The President's Personal File contains 9,125 files, arranged numerically, on persons and subjects in which President Roosevelt took a personal interest. The files vary in size according to subject matter and include incoming and outgoing correspondence, memoranda, printed material, and newspaper clippings; records of telephone calls kept by the President's personal secretary; diaries and itineraries compiled by the appointments secretary; transcripts of Roosevelt's press conferences prepared by the office of the press secretary; and a master file of speeches given by the President. One of the largest files (PPF 200) contains public reaction mail to a number of Roosevelt's speeches and government programs; there are also files on gifts, honorary memberships, fraternal organizations and philanthropic societies as well as files on personal friends and political associates of the President. An index of the titles to the name and subject files is available in the research room; a numerical listing of the files is also present.