

Historical Resources on Foreign Policy
at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum

by Spencer Howard, Archives Technician

The Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum is located in West Branch, Iowa, just a few hundred yards from Hoover's birthplace and final resting place. As part of the presidential library system administered by the National Archives and Records Administration, the Hoover Library contains approximately 2,500 linear feet of the papers of Herbert Hoover as well as copies of selected record groups from the National Archives documenting the activities of federal agencies connected to Hoover. The library also houses the papers of Mrs. Lou Henry Hoover and over 300 other collections from individuals who worked with Herbert Hoover or were associated with him. Along with Hoover's life and presidency, other areas of research interest covered by the manuscript collections include atomic energy, aviation, international relief work, agricultural economics, the isolationist movement prior to World War II, and conservative political thought in the mid-twentieth century. Audiovisual holdings at the Hoover Library include almost 40,000 still photos, 153,000 feet of motion picture film, 420 hours of audio tape, 19 hours of video tape, 79 audio discs, and transcripts of 443 oral history interviews.

The Herbert Hoover Papers span Hoover's lifetime from his birth in West Branch in 1874 to his death in New York City in 1964. To facilitate research, the library has divided the collection chronologically into five subgroups, each pertaining to a distinct period in Hoover's long career of public service: Pre-Commerce (1874-1921),

Commerce (1921-1928), Campaign & Transition (1928-1929), Presidential Period (1929-1933) and Post-Presidential Period (1933-1964). Guides to the Hoover Papers can be found online at <http://www.ecommcode2.com/hover/research/hoverpapers/index.html>.

Before his entry onto the American political stage in the 1920s, Hoover made a name for himself on the international scene, first in his early career as an international mining engineer and consultant and more famously through his humanitarian efforts during and after World War I. Limited documentation of Hoover's mining career, early humanitarian work, and involvement with the Wilson administration and relief activities in post-war Europe can be found in the Pre-Commerce subgroup. More detailed records can be found at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace at Stanford University, <http://www.hoover.org/>. Hoover's Commerce papers reveal his involvement with many foreign policy initiatives during the Harding and Coolidge administrations, including the World Foreign Debt Commission, the early phases of the St. Lawrence Seaway project, and the rapid expansion of the Commerce Department's Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce.

The Presidential Period papers are broken down into a number of series, four of which are most useful for researchers interested in foreign policy. The Foreign Affairs series, which is the most relevant, is divided into seven sub-series by topic. The Cabinet Offices series contains correspondence between the White House and the State Department. Most of the correspondence is purely administrative, but researchers should not overlook the series, because it does contain some hidden gems. The Subject File

series is a large topical file, arranged alphabetically. Finally, the Secretary's File series, the largest series in the presidential subgroup, contains some correspondence, numerous cross-references, and abstracts of letters referred to various governmental departments and agencies for attention. The cross-references in the Secretary's File are very helpful in developing leads to information within other series.

Hoover had hoped to make foreign relations a centerpiece of his administration, but his administration's accomplishments in foreign affairs were largely overshadowed by the beginning of the Great Depression at home. Between the election and the inauguration, he traveled to Central and South America, visited with leaders, and began formulating what would be known as the Good Neighbor Policy. He promised to improve diplomatic relations and to remove troops that had been sent to "keep the peace" in several Latin American countries. The records of Hoover's pre-inaugural trip to Latin America can be found in the Campaign and Transition subgroup; documents concerning Latin American relations after the inauguration can be found in the Presidential Period subgroup primarily within the Foreign Affairs series and the Subject File series.

Hoover was an ardent advocate of world peace and cooperation between nations. He had been a vocal proponent of the League of Nations after World War I, and as president he supported the establishment of a World Court and encouraged legislation, defeated in the Senate, to make the United States a member. Documents concerning the World Court can be found in the Judicial sub-series of the Foreign Affairs series. Hoover also took a strong interest in disarmament, a goal he pursued with even greater urgency as the Depression began. He believed that if all nations would cooperate to reduce

expenditures on armaments, the money saved could be put to use fighting the Depression through public works projects and programs to increase employment. He proposed cutting the number of submarines and battleships in all navies by one third and sought unsuccessfully to persuade the international community to eliminate all bombers, tanks, and chemical warfare. The London Naval Conference of 1930 successfully reduced the rate of growth of the navies of the Big Five (the United States, Britain, Japan, France and Italy), but the World Disarmament Conference Hoover called for did not convene until 1933, after he was out of office, and by that time Europe and Japan had begun vigorously rearming. The bulk of Hoover's papers concerning disarmament can be found in the Disarmament sub-series of the Foreign Affairs series.

For the United States, the Manchurian Crisis posed the greatest threat of war during Hoover's administration. The Japanese policy of expansionism in China accelerated in the late 1920s and early 1930s and became a major concern of the U.S. government. After Japan seized control of Manchuria in late 1931, Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson sent notes to both China and Japan declaring that the U.S. government would not recognize any territorial or administrative changes the Japanese might impose upon China. In March 1932 the Assembly of the League of Nations unanimously adopted an anti-Japanese resolution incorporating virtually verbatim the Stimson Doctrine of nonrecognition. The Hoover administration's response to the crisis is documented in the Manchurian Crisis sub-series of the Foreign Affairs series.

The Hoover administration also faced an ongoing problem involving the World War I debts that European nations owed to American banks and the U.S. government. In

April 1931 the economies of several European nations collapsed in rapid succession as a result of the Depression and staggering war debt or reparations payments. U.S. trade with Europe virtually ceased, and European banks and governments began to default on American loans. Hoover issued a public statement in June proposing a one-year moratorium on World War I reparations payments and war debts. He hoped the moratorium would give the United States time to restructure the crushing payments that were crippling many of Europe's economies and aggravating the Depression throughout the world. However, Congress pointedly ignored his request to review the war debts dilemma because there was strong public sentiment that debtor nations should keep their promises to pay. Congress later issued a declaration opposing any restructuring of obligations owed to the United States. The Financial sub-series of the Foreign Affairs series deals with the moratorium agreement and war debts and reparations. Related documents may be found in the State and Treasury Departments sub-series of the Cabinet Offices series and under "Business," "Chronology of Important Economic and Financial Events," and "Financial Matters" in the Subject File.

Many of the more than 300 collections at the Hoover Library contain significant documentation on U.S. foreign relations. Finding aids for all of the smaller collections can be found at <http://www.ecommcode2.com/hoover/research/historicalmaterials/hmother.html>.

There are five collections that are extraordinarily rich resources for foreign affairs research. William R. Castle, Jr., was ambassador to Japan, undersecretary of state, and (briefly) acting secretary of state during the Hoover administration, having previously

served as a division chief and assistant secretary of state. In his papers there are fourteen containers of diplomatic correspondence, which Castle arranged in bound volumes by country, then chronologically. A complete index of this correspondence has not yet been created, so it is very difficult to access this material in any meaningful way without visiting the research room. The bound volumes, as well as the remainder of the collection, are described in detail in the online finding aid. Researchers should also note that Castle's detailed diary is in the collection of Harvard University; a microfilm copy and index are available at the Hoover Library.

The papers of Irwin B. Laughlin are arranged in one large alphabetic file and consist almost entirely of diplomatic correspondence. At first glance, much of Laughlin's correspondence with fellow diplomats appears to be no more than routine diplomatic business. However, students of the State Department in the period between 1905 and 1933 and biographers of diplomatic figures will be interested in the insights these men's comments furnish into the operation of the department, their working conditions, and their colleagues. Three periods in Laughlin's diplomatic career supply the bulk of this collection: 1912-19, when he was secretary and councilor of the embassy in London; 1924-26, when he was minister to Greece; and 1929-33, when he was ambassador to monarchist and republican Spain. The collection contains only a small number of documents pertaining to his earlier service in the Far East, Paris, and Berlin (1903-12).

The papers of Truman Smith document his service as American military attaché in Berlin from 1935 to 1939. From this unique vantage point he observed and reported on the rearmament of the German army and air forces and the transformation of the German

economy. In a brilliant stroke, Smith arranged to have Col. Charles A. Lindbergh inspect the German aircraft industry and the reorganized Luftwaffe in May of 1936. As a result of his observations, Lindbergh returned to the United States in 1939 determined to campaign for greater military preparations and American neutrality. Students of the interwar years will be delighted to find that this collection contains not one but three eyewitness accounts of life in Germany in the 1930s, including his air intelligence reports and an autobiography, "Facts of Life," that contains additional comments on his service in Berlin and the aftermath of the Lindbergh-Smith reports. The third account is that of Mrs. Smith, which she compiled from her diaries.

The papers of Hugh R. Wilson are a very small collection, just four containers, consisting primarily of carbon copies of diplomatic correspondence filed alphabetically by correspondent. Wilson was a career diplomat who had a knack for being in exciting places at exciting times. He served in Berlin during World War I, Tokyo during the 1923 earthquake, and Geneva during the many peace conferences of the 1920s and 30s. He was also ambassador to Germany in 1938 and 1939. In addition to relaying details of his adventures, Wilson's correspondence illustrates in colorful detail the inner workings of the Foreign Service "family."

The papers of Francis White are particularly strong on Latin America. After serving in Peking, Tehran and Havana, White became chief of the Division of Latin American Affairs in 1923 and assistant secretary of state in 1927. White's profound interest and expertise in Latin American affairs are documented by materials accumulated during his service as councilor of the American delegation to the Sixth International

Conference of American States at Havana in 1928 and its direct offshoot—the International Conference of American States on Conciliation and Arbitration at Washington, 1928-29. He was also a delegate to the Fourth Pan American Commercial Conference at Washington in 1931 and served as chairman of the Commission of Neutrals for the Bolivia/Paraguay dispute in the Chaco from 1929 to 1933. White's files also contain materials documenting his involvement in the Peru-Colombia question over Leticia, the Guatemala-Honduras boundary dispute, Panama, the Platt Amendment with Cuba, and the Tacna-Arica Boundary Commission.

Other collections with substantial foreign affairs components include the papers of Elmer Bougerie, a Foreign Service officer who served in Africa, Mexico and West Germany in the 1940s and 1950s; Kenneth Colegrove, a political scientist at Northwestern University who served in Japan as a consultant to the OSS and General MacArthur at the end of World War II; Roy Tasco Davis, who served as envoy to Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Panama and was later named ambassador to Haiti; Edward Durand, an economist who served in the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce and later served on the U.S. Tariff Commission; Hugh Gibson, a Foreign Service officer who served in Honduras, Cuba, Belgium, Poland and Switzerland and was involved with several disarmament conferences; Henry Holthusen, a Foreign Service officer who served in Japan, Turkey, and Egypt; Joseph E. Johnson, a history professor who served in a variety of roles with the State Department, was a special envoy to the U.N. Conciliation Commission for Palestine in 1961 and was involved with the creation of the United Nations; Nathan William MacChesney, who served as U. S. minister to Canada

(unconfirmed) from 1932 to 1933 and consul general to Thailand from 1924 to 1954; Hanford MacNider, a businessman and founder of the American Legion who served as minister to Canada from 1930 to 1932; Ferdinand Mayer, a Foreign Service officer who served in Canada, Peru, Belgium, Luxemburg, Germany, and Haiti; and Henry J. Taylor, a journalist and author who served as ambassador to Switzerland from 1957 to 1961.

The research room at the Hoover Library is open weekdays from 8:45 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:45 p.m., and is closed on weekends and federal holidays. Researchers should bring some form of photo identification with them for registration. Appointments are not necessary, but researchers are strongly encouraged to contact the research room in advance of their arrival. The archives staff can be contacted by email at hoover.library@nara.gov, telephone (319) 643-5301, or FAX (319) 643-6045.

Spencer Howard is an Archives Technician at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum.