

THE FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT LIBRARY, INC.  
1600 BROADWAY  
NEW YORK CITY

OFFICE OF THE TREASURER

August 24, 1939

Mr. Amon G. Carter  
Star-Telegram Building  
Fort Worth, Texas

Dear Mr. Carter:

Some time has elapsed since we last advised you of the progress of the Library program, and we thought you might wish to have a brief account of what has been accomplished up to the present time.

Not wishing to conduct a concentrated public campaign until after the passage of the Congressional resolution authorizing Governmental acceptance of the President's gift, active solicitation in the states was not begun until early in August. However, State Committees have now been formed and are seeking to obtain their quotas. Vermont and Idaho have raised the full amounts allocated to them and a number of other states have passed the 50% mark. At the present time it appears that all necessary funds can be obtained through the public campaign which includes both state contributions and special subscriptions.

In order to complete outside construction work before the winter months, bids were invited and will be opened on August 28th. It is planned to award the general construction contract early in September and we hope to have a sufficient amount on hand to immediately begin work. In the event the full quota has not been raised through our public campaign by the time the contract is awarded, solicitation in the states will be continued beyond that date.

Recently we prepared a pamphlet explaining to committee members and possible contributors the basic facts pertaining to the proposed Library. This pamphlet is being used in our public campaign and we are enclosing a copy since we thought you might wish to see it.

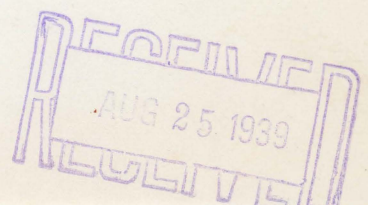
With appreciation of your interest, and best wishes, we are

Sincerely yours,

THE FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT LIBRARY, INC.

By *James T. Mathews*  
JAMES T. MATHEWS

Encls.





*The* BACKGROUND *and* PURPOSES  
*of the*  
Franklin D. Roosevelt  
Library

THROUGHOUT American History, Presidents retiring from office have removed from the National capital all correspondence and papers addressed to them because these records always have been considered as personal property. After retirement some Chief Executives have partially destroyed such material and others have disposed of their papers in such a manner as to make research and study of their collections difficult, if not impossible.

As an example of this situation, the historian who aspires to write a book concerning national development during the administration of President James Monroe would find his source material in such widely separated places as Washington, D. C., capitals of foreign nations, New York City and various other cities in the United States and Europe. Most of the Monroe papers are preserved in the Library of Congress, but the Gouverneur collection is owned by a private citizen of Washington, D. C.; approximately twelve hundred items are in The New York Public Library; notes written when he was Minister to Great Britain to the Russian Ambassador to London, which were discovered in the Vorontsoff Family library in 1935, are to be published by the Academy of Sciences of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; and other individual letters and documents are held by private collectors and libraries.

It is a popular belief that the papers of Thomas Jefferson, whose library was purchased by the Government as the nucleus of the Library of Congress, are contained in the Library of Congress. It is true that the main collection is preserved in this manner but many of his private papers are at the Massachusetts Historical Society Library; one hundred and eighty-six letters to his daughter, Mrs. Martha Jefferson Randolph, are in the Pierpont Morgan Library; some important papers covering the period from 1779 to 1835 are owned by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; for the period from 1788 to 1825 by the Buffalo Historical Society; for the period from 1789 to 1798 by the Virginia State Library; for the period from 1791 to 1835 by the Yale University Library and other papers for the period after 1791 are held by the American Philosophical Society and the Missouri Historical Society. The New York Public Library has over a hundred letters from Jefferson,



about twenty-five letters to him, a manuscript of his draft of the Declaration of Independence and another of the draft of a proposed constitution for Virginia.

Perhaps the most complete collection of presidential papers is the Washington collection held by the Library of Congress. Dr. John C. Fitzpatrick has estimated that approximately ninety-five percent of the known papers of George Washington are now in the Library. However, the original manuscript of the Articles of Capitulation at Yorktown is not in the possession of the Government and other Washington papers are widely scattered.

The circumstances that apply in the foregoing instances are true with respect to thirteen presidents. The papers of nine presidents are not available for research by reason of private ownership by heirs or explicit instruction that they are not to be opened until fixed periods of time have elapsed. The papers of six presidents have been totally or in part destroyed by fire.

The papers of John Adams and John Quincy Adams, owned by their descendants, are not available for research purposes, nor are the papers of Calvin Coolidge, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, which are in the care of the Library of Congress.

All the Lincoln papers in the possession of the Library of Congress will not be accessible until 1947, two other collections are owned by private citizens and individual items are in the hands of collectors. Springfield, Illinois, the home of the Illinois State Historical Society Library, is considered the research center for studies pertaining to Lincoln rather than Washington, D. C., where the Library of Congress is located.

Many of the Cleveland papers are privately owned, some are in the Library of Congress and a sealed box of papers deposited in the New York State Library is to be opened this year. The collection of Woodrow Wilson is owned by Mrs. Wilson and only Mr. Wilson's official Biographer has had access to it.

Many of the papers of William Henry Harrison, Tyler, Fillmore, Lincoln, Grant and Harding are believed to have been burned. The Harrison papers still in existence are held by the Wisconsin Historical Society, the Library of Congress and individual owners; a collection of Tyler papers is held by the Library of Congress, but the greater part of his collection was left to his widow's care and was destroyed in the burning of Richmond in 1865; and the Fillmore papers that survive are owned by the Buffalo Historical Society and the Yale University Library. It is thought that many of Fillmore's papers were burned by his son's executors in 1891 in accordance with a mandate in the son's will.

Grant is said to have destroyed his own collection

of papers and if any survive they are in the hands of various descendants or individuals. President Harding is popularly reported to have destroyed many papers pertaining to his administration but the collection still in existence is in the possession of the Harding Memorial Association of Marion, Ohio.

President Buchanan's collection is held by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and Hayes' are in the care of the Hayes Memorial Library at Fremont, Ohio.

President Herbert Hoover, probably conscious of the aid to research afforded by the separate preservation of source material along the lines of period and locality, constructed a library at Stanford University, California, known as the "Hoover Library on War, Revolution and Peace." There his valuable collection, including his personal library and important correspondence covering his many years of public service, is deposited.

As the result of loose practice in the past there is lack of uniformity in the methods of preserving presidential papers; the largest collections are incomplete, and important papers which should have been preserved as a unit are widely separated. It has not been possible for historians, political scientists and other scholars properly to analyze, for the benefit of Government and citizens, the background and purposes of many important matters having their origin with the Chief Executives. Even for partial studies extensive travel and large expenditures are necessary.

Officials of the Library of Congress have earnestly endeavored to bring together as much material pertaining to Chief Executives as possible and through their efforts acquisitions have been made by gifts from owners or by purchases authorized by Congress. In many cases the Manuscript Division has made photostatic copies of documents when originals could not be acquired from their owners. The value of presidential papers not owned by the Library has increased and the completion of Government collections may prove to be a costly, if not impossible, task.

Some may argue that presidential papers should automatically become the property of the United States Government; the same line of reasoning should apply to all duly elected representatives of the people. On this basis, the correspondence, research material and other information contained in the files of Members of Congress should become Government property when Members of Congress retire from office.

Like the papers of presidents, the important collections of these individuals are located in cities and towns from boundary to boundary of the nation, preserved by patriotic societies, libraries and individuals. Presidential papers may be more comprehensive with respect to the activities of Government, yet they are no more the property of the Government



than the papers of any other elected or appointed individual discharging Governmental responsibilities. Both practice and precedent have contributed to the theory that correspondence and documents of this kind are private property.

Since President Roosevelt's papers constitute the largest collection of presidential papers in existence, and since it is important that historically valuable material pertaining to the executive branch of the Government should be preserved, the subject of their disposition was discussed with friends. They suggested that he might appropriately seek the advice of historians and archivists and a meeting was arranged for this purpose.

Many of those who were consulted by the President have laid stress on the importance of preserving intact all documents covering the years of President Roosevelt's public life, both in the New York State Government and in the National Government. They have pointed out that all these papers overlap, that to separate them would destroy the unity which makes the collection unique among collections of executive papers, and that the only way to preserve this collection in the manner which will best facilitate all forms of research and study is to erect a separate building as a repository.

Acting upon the advice of those whom he consulted, the President decided to give his private papers, documents, library and pamphlets on subjects pertaining to historical events of this period, works of art, ship models, pictures, photographs, and maps to the Government. This historical material may be described as follows:

I. *Public and personal papers.* These include practically all incoming and copies of practically all outgoing correspondence as well as other material covering his years of service as New York State Senator, 1910-13; as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, 1913-20; as Governor of New York, 1929-33; and as President of the United States. They include also a large volume of political material, especially material relating to the Presidential campaigns of 1920, 1924, 1928, 1932, and 1936, and a smaller accumulation of other material of a miscellaneous character.

II. *Historical manuscripts, etc.* These consist chiefly of material relating to the history of the American Navy since 1775, which over a period of many years was collected from various sources. They include letters, log books, and other manuscripts, paintings, drawings, prints and models of many famous American naval vessels.

III. *New York State material.* This group includes an historically valuable collection of material relating to the State of New York and the Hudson Valley.

IV. *Books and pamphlets.* This collection numbers

approximately 15,000 books and pamphlets. Some of them are rare items, many are autographed copies from the authors, and the great bulk of them are important works on American History.

A recent survey of the portion of the material that is now stored in Washington shows that the papers and approximately 7,000 books occupy between 5,000 and 6,000 linear feet of shelf space. Other items include over 400 pictures and prints of sizes varying from 12 x 18 inches to 36 x 48 inches, in addition to many smaller ones, and 37 ship models. At Albany there are approximately 50 boxes, each occupying 8 cubic feet of space, containing the personal and unofficial papers of Mr. Roosevelt's two administrations as Governor of New York. There is also a considerable miscellaneous collection at Hyde Park, New York, which has not yet been surveyed.

A group of business leaders offered to supervise the solicitation of funds to build a repository for the collection along lines to be determined by archivists and historians and in keeping with the modern conception of library technique. The President then offered a tract of land from his estate at Hyde Park, New York, as a site for such a building. Public announcement of these gifts was made on December 10, 1938. Royalties received from the publication of books based upon the President's source material were given to start the building fund.

Several meetings were held by the various groups interested in the acceptance and preservation of President Roosevelt's gift and, as a result of these meetings, The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Inc., was incorporated in the State of New York to carry out these purposes in the manner determined to be most beneficial both to the public and to historians. Committees were formed to direct the program and their activities are now under way.

Any assumption that the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library is intended as a memorial to the President of the United States is misleading. Permission to give the President's name to the Library was requested by the persons who offered to cooperate in making it possible for the people to derive the most benefit from the proposed gift. They were of the opinion that such an arrangement would be the most satisfactory method of identifying the material with the period of national development with which it is most concerned. This is an established method of identifying source material of this nature but does not form a binding precedent in this respect.

It should be noted that the proposal to locate the Library at Hyde Park, New York, is in keeping with the methods advocated by historians and other scholars engaged in research work related to history. Today there is so much source material, accumulated through more than one hundred and fifty years of



national development, that the mature years of a man's life would not constitute a period of sufficient length to permit the writing of a general history from original sources. Instead, scholars prepare new general histories mainly by referring to outstanding books covering specific periods. The best of these special books concerning the Revolutionary period, the Civil War period, and other periods, all written from source material, would be consulted. The new work would condense and consolidate the facts originally drawn from source materials in the manner particularly suited to the purposes for which the new book might be written. In this way revised data covering the most important periods and events can be presented in a single volume for general public use.

A scholar studying the economic development of the United States would utilize the work of individuals considered as outstanding authorities on economic development during each era and on specific topics such as banking, manufacturing and transportation. The same principles of procedure would apply to research in other associated fields of the social sciences.

Authors of histories and books on associated subjects, as well as writers of works of fiction, have found that research is facilitated when source material pertaining to a given period is preserved at one location. Archivists and librarians having custody of historical papers preserved in this manner develop an intimate knowledge of such material and can render an effective service in advising and assisting authors.

Coupled with the desirability of segregating source material by periods of history is the desirability from the point of view of research of localizing source material whenever it is possible to do so without destroying the unity of a collection. "Localizing" may be defined as "establishing research centers in various localities where material, holding definite local interest, may be preserved."

The historical societies of the western states probably possess more informative material concerning the development of the West than is to be found elsewhere. This material is used in the preparation of state histories but it is also important to the record of national growth since reference to it must be made in describing the national acquisition and development of the territory west of the Mississippi River.

These libraries also contain the collection of papers of individuals who contributed to the development of particular states as well as important documents of Presidents of the United States and high ranking government officials who were natives of the state and may have held state offices prior to their assumption of duties which were national in scope. Other

states, like those of the West, have state historical societies and state libraries where historical material is similarly preserved.

The result of local preservation of source material has been to centralize material pertaining to locality and to individuals identified with the locality. This method has stimulated interest in historical research throughout the country by affording ready access to the material to students and historians who might be unable to visit the National Archives or the Library of Congress for the purpose of devoting many weeks to intensive research.

Archivists and librarians have cited the belief that decentralizing source material will decrease the hazard of fire or other calamity which under a policy of preservation at one point might result in a loss of the major portion of our important historical records. National capitals become important military objectives when nations are at war. During the War of 1812 many important records were destroyed when the United States Capitol was burned, and during the recent World War the Public Record Office in London escaped destruction by a narrow margin. Bombs dropped from enemy planes struck Lincoln's Inn, only a stone's throw from the Public Record Office.

In addition to conforming with the generally accepted principles of preserving historical material, the location of the Library at Hyde Park, New York, will make it possible for the President, upon his retirement, to render invaluable assistance in classifying material. Also, he will be able to supply information which might be helpful in clarifying the intent and purposes of documents.

Obviously, it would be impossible and impractical to assemble all source material on American History in the Library of Congress or the National Archives. The administration of so much material would be cumbersome; suitable facilities for its preservation would be lacking; only a small percentage of individuals would be economically qualified to engage in historical research because of the expense of traveling to their national capital; millions of citizens, including school children, who visit local libraries and museums for study and inspiration in matters pertaining to patriotism and history, would be deprived of the opportunity of viewing historic documents. A policy of extreme centralization would be bitterly contested by public libraries, historical societies and private citizens.

Through the study of history our American traditions and ideals of democracy have been passed from generation to generation. It is hoped that the establishment of The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, made possible by the generous gift from the President of the United States to the people, will result in studies



and constructive analyses of the events and policies of national significance during our era, and thus will promote the general welfare of American citizens.

*Compiled and Published by*

THE FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT LIBRARY, INC.  
1600 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, N. Y.

NOTE: The factual information contained in this statement was obtained from the following sources:

1. "*Guide to The Diplomatic History of the United States, 1775-1921*", by Samuel Flagg Bemis and Grace Gardner Griffin.
2. "*The Library of Congress Check List*", showing the location of private papers of historical interest, revised and annotated by The New York Public Library.
3. "*The Very Essence of History*", by Dr. Samuel E. Morison, Professor of History, Harvard University, published in The New York Times Magazine.
4. "*Preserving the President's Papers*", by Dr. Theodore C. Blegen, Professor of History, University of Minnesota and President of the Minnesota State Historical Society.
5. "*The Character and Extent of Fugitive Archival Material*", by Dr. Randolph G. Adams, Director of The William L. Clements Library and Professor of History at the University of Michigan.

Grateful acknowledgment is made for the assistance and information given by members of the Executive and Advisory Committees of The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Inc., and particularly to: Dr. Guy Stanton Ford, President of the University of Minnesota; Dr. Harry M. Lydenberg, Director of The New York Public Library; Dr. Samuel E. Morison, Professor of History at Harvard University; Dr. Randolph G. Adams, Director of The William L. Clements Library and President of the University of Michigan; Dr. R. D. W. Connor, Archivist of the United States; Dr. Charles A. Beard, Professor of History at Yale University; Dr. St. George L. Sioussat, Chief of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress; Honorable Samuel I. Rosenman, Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York; Dr. Waldo G. Leland, Director of The American Council of Learned Societies, and Honorable Charles E. Clark, Justice of the United States Circuit Court of Appeals, Second Judicial Circuit.