

William D. Leahy Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Prepared by Grover Batts and Allan
Teichroew



Manuscript Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2006

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Collection Summary

Title: William D. Leahy Papers

Span Dates: 1897-1959

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1935-1959)

ID No.: MSS29678

Creator: Leahy, William D.

Extent: 8,000 items; 17 containers plus 2 oversize; 7.4 linear feet; 5 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Naval officer, diplomat, and governor of Puerto Rico. Diaries, correspondence, scrapbooks, photographs, and other papers relating to Leahy's naval and diplomatic career.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Baruch, Bernard M. (Bernard Mannes), 1870-1965--Correspondence.

Churchill, Winston, 1874-1965.

Darlan, François, 1881-1942--Correspondence.

Davies, Joseph Edward--Correspondence.

Eden, Anthony, Earl of Avon, 1897-1977.

Grew, Joseph C. (Joseph Clark), 1880-1965--Correspondence.

Hull, Cordell, 1871-1955--Correspondence.

Leahy, William D.

Leahy, William D. I was there; the personal story of the Chief of Staff to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, based on his notes and diaries made at the time (1950)

Marshall, George C. (George Catlett), 1880-1959--Correspondence.

Pétain, Philippe, 1856-1951--Correspondence.

Roosevelt, Eleanor, 1884-1962--Correspondence.

Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945--Correspondence.

Truman, Harry S., 1884-1972--Correspondence.

Welles, Sumner, 1892-1961--Correspondence.

Organizations

Potsdam Conference (1945)

Puerto Rico. Governor.

United States. Navy--History--20th century.

United States. Navy--Officers--Diaries.

Subjects

Diplomatic and consular service, American--France.

World War, 1939-1945--Naval operations, American.

Places

France--Foreign relations--United States.

France--Politics and government--1940-1945.

United States--Foreign relations--France.

Occupations

Diplomats.

Governors--Puerto Rico.

Naval officers.

Statesmen.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of William D. Leahy, naval officer, diplomat, and governor of Puerto Rico, were given to the Library of Congress by Leahy in 1955 and 1959. Additional papers were given by his son, William H. Leahy, in 1971.

Processing History

The papers of William D. Leahy were arranged and described in 1972 and 1975. Part of the collection was reprocessed for filming in 1985, and the finding aid was revised in 2006.

Transfers

Some photographs have been transferred to the the Library's Prints and Photographs Division where they are identified as part of the William D. Leahy Papers.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of William D. Leahy is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of William D. Leahy are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Microfilm

A microfilm edition of part of these papers is available on five reels. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, William D. Leahy Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1875, May 6	Born, Hampton, Iowa
1897	Graduated, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.
1898	Served in Spanish-American War
1899	Commissioned ensign, United States Navy
1904	Married Louise Tennent Harrington
1912	Chief of staff, Nicaraguan occupation
1918	Commissioned captain, United States Navy

1927-1931	Chief, Bureau of Ordnance
1930	Commissioned rear admiral
1931-1933	Commander, Destroyers Scouting Force
1933-1935	Chief, Bureau of Navigation
1935-1937	As vice-admiral (1935-1936) and admiral (1936-1937) commanded battleships of the Battle Force
1937-1939	Chief, Naval Operations
1939	Retired from United States Navy Appointed governor of Puerto Rico
1940-1942	Ambassador to France
1942-1949	Chief of staff to the commander-in-chief of the United States Army and Navy
1944	Appointed fleet admiral, United States Navy
1950	Published <i>I Was There</i> . New York: Whittlessey House
1950-1959	President, Naval Historical Foundation
1959, July 20	Died, Bethesda, Md.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of William Daniel Leahy (1875-1959) span the years 1897-1959, with the bulk of the items concentrated in the period 1935-1959. Included are diaries and related matter; correspondence, notes, and writings associated with the publication of Leahy's World War II memoir, *I Was There*, which was an amended version of his diaries for the period; and scrapbooks and miscellany. The papers are organized into the following series: [Diaries](#), [Special File](#), [Writings](#), [Scrapbooks](#), and [Oversize](#).

Important in the papers are the [diaries](#) Leahy kept for the years 1893-1956. Begun formally in 1926, they consist of typed transcripts of notes and recollections from when Leahy was a graduate of the United States Naval Academy through when he was an ambassador, chief of staff, and adviser to presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman. The first volumes are significant for their portrayal of Leahy's early naval experiences as well as for their depiction of the increase in his diplomatic and strategic responsibilities. As a young officer, Leahy saw duty in various international hostilities. Limned in the diaries are his experiences aboard the *Oregon*, on which he sailed around Cape Horn to the Caribbean in time to encounter the Spanish fleet off Santiago, Cuba, in 1898; his assignment shortly thereafter to Asia, where he saw action first in the Boxer Rebellion and then in the war against Filipino insurrectionists; and his presence in the civil war in Nicaragua in 1912, where he was part of intervening American forces. Also described are his roles in World War I and his multifaceted duties as administrator and spokesman within the navy bureaucracy.

In 1939 Leahy retired from the service to become governor of Puerto Rico. Two years later he became ambassador to France. The diaries treat both episodes, with the richest segment

containing accounts and documents of Leahy's mission regarding Vichy collaboration with Adolf Hitler and the Allied attempt to prevent the transfer of the French fleet into German hands. After 1942 the diaries take on a more global perspective, covering important diplomatic and strategic aspects of the Allied war effort. As chief of staff to the president and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Leahy observed events from the highest political and military echelons. He was a participant at the Big Four Conferences in which the shape of postwar international relations was sketched -- Cairo, Teheran, Yalta, and Potsdam -- and his diaries depict the evolution of American foreign policy decisions after World War II, including the curtailment of lend-lease aid to Russia, deteriorating East-West relations in Central and Eastern Europe, and the problems of military aid to Nationalist China.

Correspondence in the Leahy Papers is limited to official letters tipped into the diaries and to a small file concerning publication of *I Was There*. Prominent among the correspondents in the diaries are Bernard M. Baruch, François Darlan, Joseph C. Grew, Cordell Hull, George C. Marshall, H. Freeman Matthews, Philippe Pétain, Eleanor Roosevelt and Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, and Sumner Welles. Valuable as well are other items tipped into the diaries, including photographs, naval and State Department documents, indexes of Leahy's early ship assignments, and a few hand-drawn maps.

The [scrapbook](#) series, which dates from 1935 and amplifies the diaries as a chronological record of Leahy's activities, contains photographs and ephemera in addition to clippings. Material relating to *I Was There* is noteworthy for offering a comparison of the published version of Leahy's memoirs against his earlier recollections and for containing a signed copy of the foreword by President Truman.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in five series:

- [Diaries, 1893-1956](#)
- [Special File, 1945-1948](#)
- [Writings, 1940-1958](#)
- [Scrapbooks, 1935-1959](#)
- [Oversize, 1940-1943](#)

Description of Series

Container

BOX 1-9
REEL 1-5

Series

Diaries, 1893-1956

Typed transcripts of bound diaries, with a handwritten introduction and family history, begun by Leahy in 1926 on the basis of personal notes and writings he retained and added to until several years before his death. Included are tipped-in photographs, correspondence, printed guest lists, duty assignments, hand-drawn and printed maps, and other biographical matter.

Arranged chronologically, with unbound diary notes for 1948-1956 organized chronologically at the end of the series.

BOX 9-10
REEL 5

Special File, 1945-1948

Copies of a memorandum, Joseph E. Davies to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1945, and an itinerary and briefing book from a cruise of Harry S. Truman to the West Indies in 1948.

Arranged alphabetically by name of individual and type of material.

BOX 10-14
not filmed

Writings, 1940-1958

Correspondence, notes, typewritten manuscripts, photographs, and galley proofs used in the writing and publication of *I Was There*.

Arranged according to type of material.

BOX 15-17
not filmed

Scrapbooks, 1935-1959

Scrapbooks of clippings and some photographs and other printed matter. Arranged chronologically.

BOX OV 1-OV 2
not filmed

Oversize, 1940-1943

Scrapbooks arranged and described according to the container and series from which the items were removed.

Arranged chronologically.

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 19,272

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-9 REEL 1-5	Diaries, 1893-1956 Typed transcripts of bound diaries, with a handwritten introduction and family history, begun by Leahy in 1926 on the basis of personal notes and writings he retained and added to until several years before his death. Included are tipped-in photographs, correspondence, printed guest lists, duty assignments, hand-drawn and printed maps, and other biographical matter. Arranged chronologically, with unbound diary notes for 1948-1956 organized chronologically at the end of the series.
BOX 1 REEL 1	Bound
BOX 1 REEL 1	1893-1931
BOX 1 REEL 1	1931-1936
BOX 2 REEL 1-2	1937
BOX 2 REEL 1-2	1938-1939
BOX 3 REEL 2	1940
BOX 4 REEL 2-3	1941
BOX 4 REEL 2-3	1941-1942
BOX 5 REEL 3	1942-1943
BOX 5 REEL 3	1943
BOX 6 REEL 3-4	1944
BOX 6 REEL 3-4	1945
BOX 7 REEL 4	1946
BOX 7 REEL 4	1947
BOX 8 REEL 4-5	1948-1950
BOX 8 REEL 4-5	1951-1952
BOX 9	Unbound notes

Diaries, 1893-1956

Container

Contents

REEL 5
BOX 9
REEL 5

1948-1956

(9 folders)

BOX 9-10
REEL 5

Special File, 1945-1948

Copies of a memorandum, Joseph E. Davies to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1945, and an itinerary and briefing book from a cruise of Harry S. Truman to the West Indies in 1948.

Arranged alphabetically by name of individual and type of material.

BOX 9
REEL 5
BOX 10
REEL 5

Davies, Joseph E., copies of memorandum to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1945, June 12

Truman, Harry S. Truman, cruise to the West Indies, itinerary and briefing book, 1948

BOX 10-14
not filmed

Writings, 1940-1958

Correspondence, notes, typewritten manuscripts, photographs, and galley proofs used in the writing and publication of *I Was There*.

Arranged according to type of material.

BOX 10

I Was There

BOX 10

Correspondence

BOX 10

Acknowledgments of books sent, 1950

BOX 10

Brandt & Brandt, 1949-1958

BOX 10

Contracts, 1949-1950

BOX 10

Distribution of manuscript, 1949-1950

BOX 10

French edition, 1950

BOX 10

General, 1947-1954

BOX 10

Heslip, Charter, 1948-1949

BOX 10

McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1949-1952

BOX 10

Permission to quote, 1949-1956

BOX 10

Press conference, 1950

BOX 10

Reader comment, 1950

BOX 10

Record of books sent, 1950-1954

BOX 10

Roosevelt, Eleanor and Franklin D., 1949

BOX 10

Saturday Evening Post articles, 1949-1950

BOX 10

Swiss controversy

BOX 11

Text

BOX 11

Corrections to manuscript

BOX 11

Final typewritten copy

BOX 11

Galley proofs

(2 folders)

BOX 11

Copy 4

BOX 11

Chapters 1-10

BOX 12

Chapters 11-23

(2 folders)

Writings, 1940-1958

Container

Contents

BOX 12	Foreword by Harry S. Truman
BOX 12	Index
BOX 12	Master copy (3 folders)
BOX 13	Notes
BOX 13	1940, Nov.-1944. Oct. 18 (5 folders)
BOX 14	1944, Oct. 29-1945, Dec. 31 (3 folders)
BOX 14	Timelines and meeting lists
BOX 14	Pictures and photocopies from original draft (2 folders)
BOX 15-17 not filmed	Scrapbooks, 1935-1959 Scrapbooks of clippings and some photographs and other printed matter. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 15	1935-1937
BOX 15	1936, Dec.-1937, Sept.
BOX 15	1937, Sept.-1938, Mar.
BOX 16	1938, Mar.-Aug.
BOX 16	1938, Aug.-1939, Feb.
BOX 16	1939
BOX 16	Feb.-May
BOX 16	May-July
BOX 16	1940 <u><i>See Oversize</i></u>
BOX 16	1942-1943 <u><i>See Oversize</i></u>
BOX 17	1944
BOX 17	1945
BOX 17	1946
BOX 17	1947
BOX 17	1948-1953
BOX 17	1954-1959
BOX OV 1-OV 2 not filmed	Oversize, 1940-1943 Scrapbooks arranged and described according to the container and series from which the items were removed. Arranged chronologically.
BOX OV 1	Scrapbooks (Container 16)
BOX OV 1	1940
BOX OV 2	1942-1943