

Richmond Pearson Hobson Papers

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Prepared by Bradley E. Gernand with the assistance of Patrick Kerwin

Collection Summary

Title: Richmond Pearson Hobson Papers

Span Dates: 1889-1966

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1890-1937)

ID No.: MSS26153

Creator: Hobson, Richmond Pearson, 1870-1973

Extent: 27,300 items ; 78 containers plus 1 oversize ; 31.6 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

Summary: Naval officer and United States representative from Alabama. Correspondence, memoranda, speeches, lectures, articles, reports, notes, analyses, naval orders, press clippings, photographs, and other papers relating chiefly to Hobson's naval career and to his efforts on behalf of prohibition, restrictions on international drug trafficking, and opposition to the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration.

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

Cervera y Topete, Pascual, 1839-1909--Correspondence.

Chadwick, French Ensor, 1844-1919--Correspondence.

Hobson family--Correspondence.

Hobson, Grizelda Hull--Correspondence.

Hobson, Richmond Pearson, 1870-1937.

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

Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919--Correspondence.

Tesla, Nikola, 1856-1943--Correspondence.

Organizations

Alcohol Education Society of America.

American Public Welfare Association.

Anti-saloon League of America.

Constitutional Democracy Association.

International Narcotic Education Association.

Lusitania (Steamship)

Public Welfare Association.

United States Naval Academy.

United States. National Prohibition Act.

United States. Navy--Equipment.

United States. Navy. Pacific Fleet.

United States. Supreme Court.

Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

World Narcotic Defense Association.

Subjects

Battleships--United States.

Depressions--1929--United States.

Drug traffic.

Narcotics.

Naval architecture.

Navy-yards and naval stations--China.

Navy-yards and naval stations--Great Britain.

Navy-yards and naval stations--Japan.

Prohibition--United States.
Shipbuilding.
Spanish-American War, 1898--Naval operations--Cuba.
Spanish-American War, 1898--Naval operations--Philippines.
Temperance--United States--Societies, etc.
Women--Suffrage--United States.
World War, 1914-1918--Prophecies.
World War, 1939-1945--Prophecies.

Places

United States--Economic conditions--1918-1945.
United States--History, Naval.
United States--Politics and government--1933-1945.

Occupations

Naval officers.
Representatives, U.S. Congress--Alabama.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Richmond P. Hobson, naval officer and U.S. representative from Alabama, were given to the Library of Congress by his wife, Grizelda Hull Hobson, and the World Narcotic Defense Association and Constitutional Democracy Association, through Mrs. Hobson, in 1939-1940 and 1944. A smaller addition was received from Hobson's daughter, Mrs. W. E. D. Stokes, Jr., in 1986.

Processing History

The Hobson Papers were processed in 1996. The finding aid was revised in 2010.

Transfers

Some broadsides have been transferred to the Rare Book and Special Collections Division of the Library, where they are identified as part of these papers.

Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of Richmond Pearson Hobson in these papers and in other collections of papers in the custody of the Library of Congress has been dedicated to the public.

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Richmond Pearson Hobson 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.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Richmond Pearson Hobson Pearson, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1870, Aug. 17	Born, Greensboro, Ala.

- 1889 Graduate, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.
- 1889-1990 Midshipman cruise aboard *Chicago* with White Squadron, Mediterranean Sea and South Atlantic ocean
- 1890-1991 Student, École d'Application du Génie Maritime, Paris, France
- 1891 Resigned as naval cadet
Appointed assistant naval constructor, United States Navy
- 1893 Temporary duty, American embassy, London, England
- 1894 Published "A Summary of the Situation and Outlook in Europe: An Introduction to the Study of Coming War," *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute. 62 pp.)
- 1894-1995 Assistant naval constructor, Navy Department, Washington, D.C.
- 1895 Commissioned as officer, United States Navy
- 1895-1996 Assigned to New York Navy Yard, Brooklyn, N.Y.
- 1896 Member of international commission supervising sea trials of Mexican naval despatch vessel *Donato Guerra*
- 1896-1997 Supervised construction of warships, Newport News, Va.
- 1897-1998 Organized and taught postgraduate fleet construction course, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.
- 1898 M.S., Washington and Jefferson College, Washington, Pa.
Assigned to North Atlantic Squadron to research stability and firing systems of ships in action, Key West, Fla.; later reported aboard flagship *New York*
Sunk the collier *Merrimac* in Santiago harbor; captured and imprisoned in Spanish fortress, Santiago, Cuba
Promoted to position of naval constructor as acknowledgment for heroism in sinking *Merrimac*
- 1898-1900 Assigned to Asiatic Station at Hong Kong to refloat and refit Spanish warships *Isla de Cuba*, *Isla de Luzon*, and *Don Juan de Austria*
- 1899 Published *The Sinking of the Merrimac* (New York: The Century Co. 306 pp.)
- 1900 Directed ship reconstruction, Cavite Navy Yard, Philippine Islands
Led preliminary reconnaissance and survey of Olongapo (later Subic Bay) naval base, Philippine Islands
Received medical treatment, Yokohama, Japan, and returned to United States on medical leave
- 1901 Promoted to captain, United States Navy
Assigned to Navy Department, Washington, D.C.
Directed United States naval exhibit, Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, N.Y.

- 1901-1902 Directed United States government exhibit, South Carolina, Interstate and West Indian Exposition, Charleston, S.C.
- 1902-1903 Superintended naval construction, Crescent Shipyard, Elizabeth, N.J.
- 1903 Assigned to Puget Sound Navy Yard, Bremerton, Wash.; resigned from United States Navy
- 1904 Appointed presidential elector-at-large, Alabama
- 1904-1905 Lectured on national chatauqua circuit
- 1905 Married Grizelda Houston Hull
- 1906 LL.D, Southern University, Greensboro, Ala.
- 1907 Published *Buck Jones at Annapolis* (New York: D. Appleton & Co. 370 pp.)
- 1907-1915 Member of Congress from sixth district of Alabama
- 1908 Published *An Appeal to the President of the United States for the Retention of the Fleet and for an Adequate Defense in the Pacific Ocean* (Washington: [publisher unknown]. 16 pp.)
- 1910 Published *In Line of Duty* (New York: D. Appleton & Co. 365 pp.)
Introduced congressional resolution which developed into Eighteenth Amendment to United States Constitution
- 1911 Delivered prohibition speech before Congress, "Alcohol, the Great Destroyer"
- 1913 Campaigned unsuccessfully for election to Senate from Alabama
- 1915 Published *An Adequate Navy and the Open-Door Policy* (Washington: [publisher unknown.] 30 pp.)
- 1919 Published *Alcohol and the Human Race* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co. 205 pp.)
- 1921-1937 Organized and led American Alcohol Education Association
- 1923-1937 Organized and led International Narcotic Education Association
- 1926 Organized and led World Conference on Narcotic Education, Philadelphia, Pa.
- 1927-1937 Organized and led World Narcotic Defense Association
- 1933 Awarded Congressional Medal of Honor
- 1934 Appointed rear admiral, United States Navy, retired, by act of Congress
- 1935-1937 Organized and led Constitutional Democracy Association
- 1936 Proposed the founding of Institution of Social Advancement

1937, Mar. 16

Died, New York, N.Y.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Richmond Pearson Hobson (1870-1937) span the years 1889-1966, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the years 1890-1937. Hobson's career is noted for his naval operation against the Spanish during the Spanish-American War; proficiency in naval design and construction; his activism in the campaign to enact a prohibition amendment to the United States Constitution, both as member of Congress and afterward; and his efforts to restrict the availability and use of recreational narcotics. All of these facets of Hobson's life are chronicled in these papers. Hobson is also noted for predicting a global war among European powers, ten years before it began in 1914, and between Japan and the United States, thirty years before Pearl Harbor. Hobson's papers contain his analyses and correspondence regarding both conflicts. The collection consists of six series: [Family Papers](#), [Navy File](#), [Congressional File](#), [Organizations File](#), [Miscellany](#), and [Oversize](#).

Hobson and his wife, Grizelda, wrote frequently to one another during times of separation. Hobson also corresponded with other members of his family, including his brother, sisters, and mother. The [Family Papers](#) contain information regarding both professional and personal endeavors related to subjects also documented in other series in the collection.

The [United States Navy](#) series includes files regarding a congressional bill to retire him as admiral and his service in the Spanish-American War. His papers record his inspections of the battle fleet under wartime conditions, his attempts to sink the *Merrimac* in a Cuban harbor and bottleneck an opposing fleet, and his efforts to refloat and refit ruined Spanish warships near Cuba and the Philippine Islands. Hobson believed the United States needed to secure naval facilities in the Far East, and his visits to Chinese, Japanese, and British colonial yards produced detailed descriptions of each area. He also was the first to report on the small Spanish Philippine station at Olongapo on Subic Bay, later developed as an American base. Included are accounts of the Mexican warship *Donato Guerra* and correspondence with French E. Chadwick, Nikola Tesla, the crew of the *Merrimac*, Naval Academy classmates and shipmates, and Pascual Cervera y Topete, the Spanish admiral who captured Hobson at Cuba. Lecture notes and correspondence regarding the first ship construction course at the United States Naval Academy, organized and taught by Hobson but canceled because of faculty opposition, are also included.

The [Congressional File](#) documents Hobson's career as a member of Congress from Alabama and his efforts to enact a prohibition amendment to the Constitution. Correspondents include leaders of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Anti-Saloon League of America (which he later joined as traveling orator), and other anti-alcohol movements. It also features his work to enlarge the American fleet, fund an aggressive battleship construction program, and establish a permanent fleet in the Pacific Ocean. His distrust of Japanese intentions, which he believed were rooted in aggressive imperialism, spurred his interest in a permanent Pacific fleet, and many of his speeches and correspondence are devoted to the subject. Of particular note is a series of exchanges between Hobson and Theodore Roosevelt in which the two debated issues related to Japan. Hobson also headed a congressional panel investigating alleged police brutality during a 1913 national suffragette march in Washington, and the Congressional File contains correspondence and reports from participants.

The [Organizations File](#) contains the records of several associations as well as of the 1936 [New York Olympic Committee](#). These organizations, with exception of the Olympic committee, operated more or less concurrently from the same offices with shared officers, and the administrative files of the three overlap. Hobson remained interested in prohibition after leaving Congress. He traveled on behalf of the [Anti-Saloon League of America](#) until passage of the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, after which he worked to restrict narcotic use. He established and directed the [Alcohol Education Society of America](#), the [International Narcotic Education Association](#), and the [World Narcotic Defense Association](#) to educate Americans regarding drugs and to lobby state, national, and international legislatures to eliminate the drug trade. He organized an international convention during which he was received privately by the pope and secured worldwide agreement limiting the drug trade. Afterward Hobson, believing patriotism to be waning, founded the [Public Welfare Association](#) to campaign for greater love of country. He also organized the [Constitutional Democracy Association](#), which worked to defeat Franklin D. Roosevelt's attempt to enlarge the United States Supreme Court, and he campaigned with Hubert W. Eldred to establish a national Veterans Reserve Corps, ideological forebear of the contemporary military reserve system. After Hobson's death in 1937, these organizations disbanded.

Papers that are personal in nature are grouped in the [Miscellany File](#). Included are correspondence, memoranda, newspaper clippings, photographs, and reports regarding Hobson's life and death, a plan of George Huntington Hull, Jr., to spark industrial recovery during the Great Depression, the sinking of the British passenger liner *Lusitania*, prohibition, Theodore Roosevelt, and World War I.

Arrangement of the Papers

The collection is arranged in six series :

- [Family Papers, 1898-1966](#)
- [Navy File, 1886-1942](#)
- [Congressional File, 1900-1938](#)
- [Organizations File, 1909-1939](#)
- [Miscellany, 1889-1944](#)
- [Oversize, circa 1898-circa 1934](#)

Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1-16	<u>Family Papers, 1898-1966</u> Correspondence and cables between Hobson and his wife, children, siblings, parents, and other relatives. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 17-27	<u>Navy File, 1886-1942</u> Articles, books, correspondence and cables, memoranda, notes, orders, papers, photographs, press clippings, reports, and speeches. Organized alphabetically by name of person, subject, or type of material and thereunder chronologically.
BOX 28-38	<u>Congressional File, 1900-1938</u> Articles, books, correspondence, memoranda, photographs, press clippings, printed matter, reports, speeches, and writings. Arranged alphabetically by subject and thereunder chronologically.
BOX 39-70	<u>Organizations File, 1909-1939</u>
BOX 39	<u>Alcohol Education Association of America, 1919-1922</u> Correspondence and reports. Arranged alphabetically by subject and thereunder chronologically.
BOX 39-45	<u>Anti-Saloon League of America, 1909-1927</u> Correspondence and reports. Arranged alphabetically by subject and thereunder chronologically.
BOX 45-55	<u>Constitutional Democracy Association, 1934-1938</u> Correspondence, press clippings, and reports. Arranged alphabetically by subject and thereunder chronologically.
BOX 56	<u>International Narcotic Education Association, 1923-1937</u> Correspondence, press clippings, and reports. Arranged alphabetically by subject and thereunder chronologically.
BOX 56	<u>New York Olympic Committee, 1936-1937</u> Correspondence arranged chronologically.
BOX 56-62	<u>Public Welfare Association, 1934-1937</u> Correspondence, press clippings, and reports. Arranged alphabetically by subject and thereunder chronologically.
BOX 62-71	<u>World Narcotic Defense Association, 1928-1939</u> Correspondence, press clippings, and reports. Arranged alphabetically by subject and thereunder chronologically.

BOX 72-78

Miscellany, 1889-1944

Correspondence and cables, memoranda, notes, photographs, press clippings, and reports.
Organized alphabetically by name of person, subject, or type of material and thereunder
chronologically.

BOX OV 1

Oversize, circa 1898-circa 1934

Oversize material consisting mostly of charts, ship schematics, and panoramic photographs.
Organized and described according to the series, folders, and boxes from which the items were
removed.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-16	Family Papers, 1898-1966 Correspondence and cables between Hobson and his wife, children, siblings, parents, and other relatives. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 1	5 June 1898-5 Feb. 1905 (10 folders)
BOX 2	7 Feb.-21 Apr. 1905 (7 folders)
BOX 3	22 Apr.-31 Oct. 1905 (9 folders)
BOX 4	1 Nov. 1905-28 Feb. 1906 (9 folders)
BOX 5	1 Mar.-24 June 1906 (7 folders)
BOX 6	25 June-17 Aug. 1906 (7 folders)
BOX 7	19 Aug.-19 Nov. 1906 (7 folders)
BOX 8	20 Nov. 1906-30 Apr. 1907 (9 folders)
BOX 9	1 May-19 July 1907 (8 folders)
BOX 10	20 July-31 Dec. 1907 (9 folders)
BOX 11	1 Jan.-19 Aug. 1908 (9 folders)
BOX 12	20 Aug. 1908-2 Dec. 1912 (11 folders)
BOX 13	1912, undated-16 Aug. 1916 (8 folders)
BOX 14	1916, undated-16 Dec. 1925 (10 folders)
BOX 15	9 Jan. 1926-31 May 1934 (9 folders)
BOX 16	1 June 1934-16 July 1966, undated (10 folders)
BOX 17-27	Navy File, 1886-1942 Articles, books, correspondence and cables, memoranda, notes, orders, papers, photographs, press clippings, reports, and speeches. Organized alphabetically by name of person, subject, or type of material and thereunder chronologically.

BOX 17	<p>Articles and papers</p> <p>"A Summary of the Situation and Outlook in Europe: An Introduction into the Study of Coming War"</p> <p>Correspondence, 1895-1896</p> <p>Outline, undated</p> <p>Published copy and reviews, 1895</p> <p>Source material</p> <p> General, undated</p> <p> Naval strength, undated</p> <p>General, 1894-1899</p> <p>"In Time of Peace, Prepare for War," 1908</p> <p>"Notes on the Establishment of a Phrenological Equation," undated</p> <p>"Notes on the Yacht <i>Defender</i> and the Use of Aluminum in Marine Construction," circa 1895</p>
BOX 18	<p>Asiatic Squadron, Hong Kong, circa 1898 <i>See also Oversize</i></p> <p>Books</p> <p> <i>Buck Jones at Annapolis</i></p> <p> Correspondence, 1906-1908</p> <p> Drafts, undated</p> <p> (2 folders)</p> <p> Reviews, 1907</p> <p> <i>History of the United States Naval Academy</i>, 1910-1912</p> <p> <i>In Line of Duty</i></p> <p> Correspondence, 1908-1910, 1920, undated</p> <p> Drafts, undated</p> <p> (2 folders)</p> <p> Reviews, 1910</p>
BOX 19	<p> <i>The Sinking of the Merrimac</i>, 1898-1899, 1915, 1933-1936</p> <p>Cavite Navy Yard, Philippine Islands, 1899-1900</p> <p>Charges and accusations</p> <p> Bowles, Francis T., 1896</p> <p> Hobson, Richmond Pearson, by</p> <p> Bowles, Francis T., 1896</p> <p> Woodward, Joseph J., 1897</p> <p> <i>Charleston</i> (cruiser), 1900, undated</p> <p>Congressional bill re retirement as admiral</p> <p> Congratulations, 1934</p>
BOX 20	<p>Correspondence, 1934-1935</p> <p> (2 folders)</p> <p> Passage, 1931-1934</p> <p> Supporting evidence and statements, 1931-1934</p> <p>Congressional Medal of Honor <i>See Container 73, same heading</i></p> <p>Disappearing gun turrets, 1895, undated</p> <p><i>Donato Guerra</i> (despatch vessel), 1897</p> <p>Finances, 1895-1896</p> <p>Fiske, Bradley A., 1916-1917</p> <p>Forsyth, James McQueen, 1912</p>

	France, 1892-1893
	<i>Hobson</i> (destroyer), 1941-1942
	<i>Illinois</i> (battleship), 1901
	Japan, 1900
	<i>Kearsarge</i> (sloop-of-war), 1894
BOX 21	Medical record, 1900-1903
	Naval constructors, 1895-1898, undated
	Notes, undated
	Official orders and correspondence, 1890-1901, undated (2 folders)
	<i>Oregon</i> (battleship), 1900-1901
	Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, N.Y., 1901 (2 folders)
	Pension, 1926-1934
BOX 22	Personal correspondence, 1890, 1898-1905, 1915-1918, 1936-1937, undated
	Photographs, circa 1889-1898
	Public engagements, 1898
	Sea duty, 1895-1897
	Service record, undated
	Ship stability, 1897
	Shipyards and naval stations, survey of
	Foochow Navy Yard, China, 1899-1900 <i>See also Oversize</i>
	Hong Kong Navy Yard, China, 1900
	Hongkong & Whampoa Dock Co., 1900
	Ishikawajima Shipbuilding Co., 1900
	Kure Navy Yard, Japan, 1900
	Need for bases in Far East, 1894
	New Amoy Dock Co., 1900
	Olongapo (Subic Bay) naval station, Philippine Islands, 1900
	Yokosuka Navy Yard, Japan, 1900
BOX 23	Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), 1894
	Spanish-American War (1898)
	Bustamente, Joaquin, 1913
	Cervera y Topete, Pascual, 1903-1909, 1916, 1935
	Chadwick, French Ensor, 1909, 1915
	Confinement and release, Cuba, 1898, 1905, 1917, undated
	Kissing controversy, 1898-1903
	Matanzas, Cuba, battle, 1898
	<i>Merrimac</i> (collier)
	Accolades and commendations, 1898-1900, 1909, 1917
	Crew
	Correspondence, 1910-1918, 1935
	Recognition by government, 1898-1901, 1916, 1935
	Service records, 1935
	Poems, circa 1898
	Published accounts, 1898, 1933, 1940-1942

- Statements by Hobson, 1910, undated
 Witnesses, 1934
 Naval construction, circa 1898
- BOX 24** Radio dramatizations and addresses, 1931-1936
 Sampson, William T., 1898-1900
 San Juan, Puerto Rico, battle, 1898
 Santiago, Cuba, circa 1898, 1934
 Scrapbooks, 1898
 (2 folders)
 Ship inspections
Cincinnati (protected cruiser), 1898
Defender (yacht), 1895-1898
Detroit (cruiser), 1898
Edith Howes (coal lighter), 1898
Ericsson (torpedo gunboat), 1898
Hornet (yacht), 1898
Indiana (battleship), 1898
Iowa (battleship), 1895-1898
Iris (screw steamer), 1898-circa 1899
Machias (patrol gunboat), 1898
Mangrove (cargo tender), 1898
 Miscellaneous, 1898
Nashville (patrol gunboat), 1898
Newport (patrol gunboat), 1898
New York (armored cruiser), 1898
Potomac (ocean tugboat), 1898
Tecumseh (tugboat), 1898
Wilmington (gunboat), 1898
- BOX 25** Spanish fleet, battle readiness, 1898
 Spanish wrecks
 Cuba
 Operations logs, 1898
 Ships
Cristobal Colon (armored cruiser)
 General, 1898
 Report of special board, 1898
Infanta Maria Teresa (armored cruiser)
 General, 1898-1899, undated
 Photographs, 1898
Reina Mercedes (cruiser), 1898
 Unidentified ships, 1898
 Wrecking companies, 1896-1900, 1928
 General
 Overview, 1899-1912
 Refloating techniques, 1898-1899 *See also Oversize*
 Ship specifications and designs, 1886, 1896-1898

- BOX 26** Philippine Islands
 Location and disposition of wrecks, circa 1898 *See also Oversize*
 Ships
Almirante Oquendo (armored cruiser), 1900, 1934
Don Juan de Austria (cruiser), 1898-1900, undated
Emperador Carlos V (cruiser), 1895-1898, undated *See also Oversize*
Isla de Cuba (cruiser), 1899, undated
Isla de Luzon (cruiser), 1899, 1907, undated
Pelayo (battleship), 1898
Vizcaya (armored cruiser), 1898, 1934, undated
 Unidentified, 1898
 Shipyards, 1898-1900, undated
 (2 folders)
 Writings, undated
 Speeches, undated
- BOX 27** United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.
 Classmates and shipmates, 1889-1892
 Naval construction course
 Correspondence, 1895-1897, undated
 History, 1904
 Lectures, undated
 (3 folders)
 Outline of lectures , undated
 (2 folders)
 Van Hoose, G. W. *See Container 20, Disappearing gun turrets*
- BOX 28-38** **Congressional File, 1900-1938**
 Articles, books, correspondence, memoranda, photographs, press clippings, printed matter, reports, speeches, and writings.
 Arranged alphabetically by subject and thereunder chronologically.
- BOX 28** Agriculture, 1907-1913
 Articles and essays
 Disarmament, 1908
 General, 1907-1912, undated,
 (3 folders)
 United States Naval Academy prize essay, 1908
 China, 1915
 Clippings, 1906-1915, undated
- BOX 29** Congressional frank, misuse, 1916
 Council on National Defense *See also Container 72, same heading*
 Correspondence, 1912-1916
 (2 folders)
 Legislation, 1911-1913, undated
 Miscellany, undated
 Democratic party, 1912
 Election campaigns

Congressional File, 1900-1938

Container

Contents

	1904
	1906
	Broadsides
	Clippings
	Correspondence
	Congratulatory
	(3 folders)
	General
	Miscellany
BOX 30	1908
	1910
	1914
	Broadsides, bills, and brochures
	Clippings
	Contributions
	Correspondence
	Speeches
	1916
	1938
	Undated
	Finances, 1909-1913
	General correspondence, 1907-1915
	International arbitration and interparliamentary affairs, 1907-1914
BOX 31	Japan
	Clippings, 1906-1915
	Correspondence, 1908-1915
	Miscellany, 1907, undated
	Roosevelt, Theodore, 1908
	Writings, 1907, undated
	Keliher, John A., 1908-1909
	Navy
	Clippings, 1906-1914
	Committee of the Whole House
	General, 1908, undated
	Speeches, 1908-1915
BOX 32	Committee on Naval Affairs
	Condition of the fleet, 1914-1915
	General, 1908-1915, undated
	Ordnance experiments, 1912-1915
	Democratic party policy, 1908-1912
	Enlargement, 1903-1915, undated
	Pacific Ocean, 1908-1911
	Speeches, 1904-1915, undated
	(2 folders)
BOX 33	Notebook, 1911-1914
	Peace resolutions

Congressional File, 1900-1938

Container

Contents

	General, 1905-1906, undated
	State legislatures, 1906-1907
	Pennsylvania Society, 1914
	Personal privilege (absence from floor), 1912
	Practical Peace League, 1907-1908, undated
	Prohibition
	Articles, 1915
	Bills and resolutions, 1913-1915, undated (2 folders)
	Books, 1912-1915, undated
	Broadsides and brochures
	1900-1910
BOX 34	1911-1922, undated (5 folders)
	Clippings, 1909-1915, undated
BOX 35	Constitutional Prohibition Association, 1914, undated
	Correspondence
	18 Mar. 1907-30 Mar. 1915 (6 folders)
BOX 36	2 Apr. 1915-23 Nov. 1918 (2 folders)
	Educational campaign, 1911-1916, undated
	Liquor traffic, 1914-1915, undated (2 folders)
	Speeches
	General
	1910-1916
BOX 37	Undated
	"The Great Destroyer," 1910-1915, undated
	"The Truth About Alcohol," 1914-1915
	Roll calls, 1913-1915
	Speeches, 1906-1915, undated (5 folders)
BOX 38	<i>Titanic</i> (passenger vessel), 1912
	Vice presidency, nomination for, 1906
	Women's suffrage
	Notes and clippings, 1915, undated
	Speeches, 1915, undated
	Suffrage parade, Washington, D.C., 1913 (2 folders)
BOX 39-70	Organizations File, 1909-1939
BOX 39	Alcohol Education Association of America, 1919-1922
	Correspondence and reports. Arranged alphabetically by subject and thereunder chronologically.

Organizations File, 1909-1939

Container

Contents

BOX 39	Correspondence, 1921-1922 Notebooks, 1919-1922 (3 folders) Notes, undated Publications, undated
BOX 39-45	Anti-Saloon League of America, 1909-1927 Correspondence and reports. Arranged alphabetically by subject and thereunder chronologically.
BOX 39	Appointment and account ledgers 1915-1918 (4 folders)
BOX 40	1918-1921 (4 folders) Assistant, William H. Morgan, 1916, undated Chatauquas Address book, undated Daily expenses, 1916-1917 Journal, 1920 Schedules, undated Contracts and agreements, 1916-1920
BOX 41	Convention, Atlantic City, N.J., 1915 Dispute over election campaign payments, 1916 Eighteenth Amendment to United States Constitution, 1917-1920, undated General correspondence, 1909-1922, undated (2 folders) National Lincoln Chatauquas System, 1918-1919 Notes, 1916-1917, undated Printed matter, 1916-1920, undated Prohibition Party, 1916 Speeches and writings Articles and briefs, 1916-1918, undated Book, <i>Alcohol and the Human Race</i> Correspondence, 1915-1921, undated Drafts, undated (1 folder)
BOX 42	Drafts, undated (4 folders)
BOX 43	Drafts, undated (3 folders) Outline, undated Pamphlet edition, 1919, undated
BOX 44	Publicity and distribution, 1920, undated Source material

Organizations File, 1909-1939

Container

Contents

	General, 1906-1918, undated (3 folders)
BOX 45	Hobson, Sarah Ann, compiled by, 1917-1919 (2 folders) Speeches Correspondence, 1916-1920 Draft and final copies, 1917-1927, undated
BOX 45-55	Constitutional Democracy Association, 1934-1938 Correspondence, press clippings, and reports. Arranged alphabetically by subject and thereunder chronologically.
BOX 45	America for God Crusade, 1936 American Coalition, 1937, undated American Legion, 1935-1936, undated "A" miscellaneous, 1935-1937
BOX 46	Board of Directors Allen, Frederick Hobbes, 1936-1937 Belknap, Reginald R., 1935-1937 General, 1937 Meetings, 1935-1937 (5 folders) Bondy, Joseph J., 1937, undated Bylaws and articles of incorporation, 1935 "B" miscellaneous, 1935-1937 Close-out of organization and headquarters, 1937 Commissioner of Internal Revenue, 1935 Communism, 1934-1937, undated <i>Constitutional Democracy</i> , 1937
BOX 47	Corn Exchange Bank and Trust Co., 1937 "C" miscellaneous, 1937 Defend the Constitution clubs, 1935-1936 Donors, 1937 A-S (4 folders)
BOX 48	T-Z "D" miscellaneous, 1937 Eldred, Hubert W. <i>See Container 49, National Veterans Reserve Corps</i> Executive branch reorganization bill, 1937 Executive director, Edward C. Fielder, 1937 Executive vice president, Lawrence S. Adams, 1935-1937 Expenses, 1936-1938 (2 folders) "E-F" miscellaneous, 1937 Gannett, Frank E., 1935-1937 "G" miscellaneous, 1937 Harris, William Budington, 1937

Organizations File, 1909-1939

Container

Contents

	"H" miscellaneous, 1937
BOX 49	Institution for Social Advancement and Institution for Social Evolution, 1934-1935 Ives, Henry Swift <i>See Container 51, Special counsel</i> Jews, 1936 "J-K" miscellaneous, 1937-1938 Literature and letters, 1936-1937 "L" miscellaneous, 1937 Mission statement, 1935-1937, undated "M" miscellaneous, 1937 National Advisory Committee, 1937, undated National Veterans Reserve Corps, 1936, undated New York, N.Y., office, 1936-1938, undated "N-O" miscellaneous, 1937-1938, undated
BOX 50	Pamphlets, brochures, and information packets, 1937, undated Petty cash expenses, 1936-1938, undated President Hobson, Richmond Pearson, 1936-1937, undated Stokes, J.G. Phelps, 1922, 1937, undated Progress reports, 1937, undated Public welfare committees, 1935-1936, undated Publicity and outreach, 1937 "P" miscellaneous, 1937, undated Roosevelt, Franklin D., 1936-1937, undated "R" miscellaneous, 1937 Sokolsky, George E., "Revolution," 1937 Solicitations and appeals Corporations, 1935-1937 General, 1934-1937, undated (3 folders) Large gifts, 1937 Nonprofit organizations, 1937 Philanthropic organizations, 1934-1936 Special counsel, Henry Swift Ives, 1937 Speeches, 1933-1936, undated Staff salaries, 1937-1938 "S" miscellaneous, 1935-1938
BOX 51	Thompson, Dorothy, "Our Pending Revolution in Government," 1937 Travel expenses, 1936-1937 Treasurers' reports, 1936-1937, undated "T" miscellaneous, 1937 United States Supreme Court, proposed enlargement Agricultural groups, 1937 Background information, 1937, undated Bar associations, 1937, undated Educators, 1937
BOX 52	

Organizations File, 1909-1939

Container

Contents

	Lawyers, judges, and legal scholars, 1937 (2 folders)
BOX 53	Opinion and commentary, 1937, undated (2 folders) Organizations opposed General, 1937, undated Media, by state, 1937 Alabama-Pennsylvania (2 folders)
BOX 54	Rhode Island-Wyoming Press releases, 1937 Printed matter, 1937 Radio addresses, 1937, undated Religious organizations, 1937, undated Requests for action, 1937 State legislatures, 1937, undated Telegrams and night letters, 1937 United States House of Representatives, 1937, undated
BOX 55	United States Senate, 1937, undated Womens' organizations, 1937 "U" miscellaneous, 1937 Washington, D.C., office, 1937, undated Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1936, undated "W-Z" miscellaneous, 1937, undated
BOX 56	International Narcotic Education Association, 1923-1937 Correspondence, press clippings, and reports. Arranged alphabetically by subject and thereunder chronologically.
BOX 56	Articles of incorporation, 1923-1925 Correspondence, 1924-1931 Financial records, 1930-1936 Miscellany, 1924-1937 <i>Narcotic Education</i> , 1927-1931 New York Narcotic Survey Committee, 1926-1931 Publications, 1923-1928
BOX 56	New York Olympic Committee, 1936-1937 Correspondence arranged chronologically.
BOX 56-62	Public Welfare Association, 1934-1937 Correspondence, press clippings, and reports. Arranged alphabetically by subject and thereunder chronologically.
BOX 56	American Coalition, 1935-1936 Americanism Clearing House, 1936 "A" miscellaneous, 1936-1937

Organizations File, 1909-1939

Container

Contents

	Board of Directors
	General, 1936
	Haight, C. Sidney, 1936
	Budgets and expenses, 1936
BOX 57	Bylaws and articles of incorporation, 1936
	"B" miscellaneous, 1936-1937
	Contributions, 1936-1937
	Corporate members, 1936
	"C" miscellaneous, 1936-1937
	Declaration of Americanism
	Businesses, 1936
	Chambers of commerce, 1936
	Patriotic societies, 1934-1936
	Signed declarations, 1936
	"D-E" miscellaneous, 1936
	(2 folders)
	Field secretary, A. G. Morse, 1935-1937, undated
	(1 folder)
BOX 58	Field secretary, A. G. Morse, 1935-1937, undated
	(1 folder)
	Form letters, 1936, undated
	Friends of the Constitution contest
	Entries, 1936
	General correspondence, 1936
	Invitations to participate, 1936
	Replies
	Superintendents of education, 1936-1937
	Universities and colleges, 1936
	Rules and procedures, 1936
	"F" miscellaneous, 1936
	Given, John B., 1936
	"G-L" miscellaneous, 1935-1937
	(1 folder)
BOX 59	"G-L" miscellaneous, 1935-1937
	(2 folders)
	Meetings, 1936-1937
	Military-Naval Club
	General, 1936-1937
	(2 folders)
	National Defense Committee, 1935-1937, undated
	(2 folders)
	Mission statement, 1936
	"M-N" miscellaneous, 1936-1938
	(2 folders)
BOX 60	Officers and committee members, 1936
	"O" miscellaneous, 1936
	Pamphlets, 1936

Organizations File, 1909-1939

Container

Contents

	<i>Peace and Freedom Review</i> , 1937
	Political party conventions (1936)
	Congressmen
	Democratic Party
	Accommodations and arrangements
	Delegate lists
	State committee members
	Governors
	Platforms
	Republican Party
	Delegate lists
	Hull, George Huntington, Jr. (brother-in-law), economic plan
BOX 61	Initiatives
	Officers and committee members
	Senators
	Speeches
	Propaganda by other groups, 1936, undated
	<i>Public Welfare Association Clearing House</i>
	Contributors, 1935-1936
	Miscellaneous, 1936, undated
	"P-R" miscellaneous, 1935-1937
	Solicitations
	Corporations, 1936-1937
	Individuals, 1936-1937
	Lists, 1934-1937
BOX 62	Nonprofit organizations, 1936
	Universities and colleges, 1936
	Women's clubs, 1936
	Strategy Board, 1936-1937
	"S-U" miscellaneous, 1936-1937
	Veteran's Reserve Corps, 1936
	"V-W" miscellaneous, 1936-1937
BOX 62-71	World Narcotic Defense Association, 1928-1939
	Correspondence, press clippings, and reports.
	Arranged alphabetically by subject and thereunder chronologically.
BOX 62	Adams, Lawrence S., 1931-1937
	Allen, Frederick H., 1931-1934
BOX 63	Annual meetings, 1934-1936
	(2 folders)
	Articles, 1934-1935
	"A" miscellaneous, 1934-1935
	Brewster, Sidney W., 1929-1936
	Bylaws and articles of incorporation, 1935, undated
	"B" miscellaneous, 1931-1937, undated
	Catholic church, cardinals, 1931-1933

Organizations File, 1909-1939

Container

Contents

	China, 1933-1934
	Conference of Committees, 1932
	Convention for Limiting the Manufacture and Regulating the Distribution of Narcotic Drugs (1931)
	Anniversaries, 1933-1936
	Correspondence, 1931
	Miscellany, 1931-1934
	Copeland, Royal S., 1933-1935
	"C" miscellaneous, 1933-1936
BOX 64	Doughton, Robert L., 1936
	"D-E" miscellaneous, 1929-1935
	Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1936
	Fiscal matters
	Financial aide to the president, Richmond P. Hobson, Jr., 1932
	Financial statements, 1935-1936
	(2 folders)
	Ledger, 1931-1932
BOX 65	Fish, Hamilton, Jr., 1933-1937
	Fiske, Grove C., 1935
	Forbes, W. Cameron, 1933-1935
	Ford, Henry, 1933-1934
	Fred T. Ley & Co., 1931-1936
	Geneva Center, Geneva, Switzerland, 1931-1937, undated
	(5 folders)
	History of the association, 1935-1936, undated
	Hull, George Huntington, Jr., plan for economic recovery, 1931-1933, undated
	"H" miscellaneous, 1933-1935
BOX 66	Institution of Social Evolution, 1936
	International White Cross Anti-Narcotic League, 1934-1935
	"I" miscellaneous, 1934-1936
	John Price Jones Corp., 1932-1936
	<i>Journal of Narcotic Education</i> , 1933-1934
	Justice Department, 1933-1935
	"J" miscellaneous, 1933-1935
	Killian, John A., 1934, undated
	"K" miscellaneous, 1935-1937
	League of Nations, 1933-1936
	Lichtenstein, Perry M., 1931-1935, undated
	Lilly, Josiah K., 1929-1937
	"L" miscellaneous, 1933-1935
	Macleay, John Bayne, 1934-1935
	Martin, Clarence E., 1935
	McNaboe, J. J., 1936-1937
BOX 67	Michigan, 1928-1935
	"M" miscellaneous, 1933-1937
	Narcotic Education Week

Organizations File, 1909-1939

Container

Contents

	1930-1935 (2 folders)
	1936 Correspondence (3 folders) General Radio addresses
BOX 68	1937 General Radio addresses Narcotic Educational Association of Wisconsin, 1932-1934 Notebooks, 1932-1937 "N" miscellaneous, 1930-1936 Office, New York, N.Y., 1931-1937, undated Oklahoma Narcotic Educational Association, 1931-1933
BOX 69	"O" miscellaneous, 1932-1936 Pan-American Union, 1933-1935 Payne, E. George, 1931-1939 Pittman, Key, 1935 "P" miscellaneous, 1933-1937 Rehabilitation, 1933-1937 Riggs, Charles Edward, 1933-1936 Roosevelt, Franklin D., 1933-1935 "R" miscellaneous, 1933-1937 Semiannual meetings, 1935-1936 (2 folders) Solicitations, 1932-1937 South Manchuria Railway Co., 1934-1935 Speeches, 1931-1937, undated
BOX 70	State Department, 1932-1936 (2 folders) <i>Studies and Commentaries of the World Narcotic Defense Association</i> , 1935-1937 "S" miscellaneous, 1935-1939 Texas, 1932 Travel, 1931-1935 Treasury Department, 1931-1935 Tuttle, Charles H., 1936-1937, undated "T" miscellaneous, 1934
BOX 71	Uniform state narcotic drug laws Correspondence, 1932-1937 General, 1932-1937, undated United States Department of Applied Education, proposed, 1933-1934, undated "V" miscellaneous, 1935-1936 Wertheim, Edward L., 1932-1936 Widener, Joseph E., 1933-1937 World Narcotics Defense Conference, 1931

Organizations File, 1909-1939

Container

Contents

"W-Y" miscellaneous, 1933-1937

BOX 72-78

Miscellany, 1889-1944

Correspondence and cables, memoranda, notes, photographs, press clippings, and reports. Organized alphabetically by name of person, subject, or type of material and thereunder chronologically.

BOX 72

Articles and papers, circa 1901, 1918, undated

Biographical

Anecdotes by friends and relatives, 1939, undated

General, undated

Hobson, Grizelda H. (wife), untitled, undated

(3 folders)

BOX 73

Postle, Arthur S., untitled work

Correspondence, 1946-1947, undated

Drafts, undated

Books by Hobson, circa 1918

Burbank, Luther, 1902, 1916-1919

Congressional Medal of Honor, 1929-1935, 1944

Council on National Defense, 1916 *See also Container 29, same heading*

Cuba, 1905

Death

Autopsy report, 1937

Clippings, 1937

Condolences

Letters, 1937, undated

(3 folders)

BOX 74

Telegrams and night letters, 1937

Correspondence, 1937

Flower and calling cards, 1937

Tributes, 1937-1938, undated

General correspondence, 1901-1905, 1911-1916, 1921-1937

Greeley, Adolphus Washington, 1935, undated

Handprint, undated

Hobson, Grizelda H.

Marriage, 1905, 1938

"Notes for future biographer," 1944

Pension from Cuban government, 1937

Hobson, Richmond Pearson, Jr. (son), 1924-1929

Home and household belongings, 1917-1919, undated

Honorary degrees, 1906, 1932-1935

Hull, George Huntington, Jr.

Economic recovery plan

Articles and papers, 1934, undated *See also Oversize*

Congressional bill, undated

Correspondence, 1931-1933

Marriage, circa 1907

- BOX 75** Hull, George Huntington, Sr. (father-in-law), re economic depressions, 1913
International arbitration and interparliamentary affairs, 1904-1905
Jacobs-Bond, Carrie, 1924
Japan, 1915, 1921, undated
Life insurance, 1899-1900
Lusitania (passenger vessel)
 Clippings, 1915
 Correspondence, 1915
 Miscellany, 1915
Magnolia Grove, Greensboro, Ala., 1906-1907, 1942-1943, undated
Naval matters
 Clippings, 1904, undated
 Correspondence, 1905, 1914-1917
 Enlarging the fleet, 1903-1907, 1916, 1935-1936, undated
 Intelligence, 1917-1918
 Speeches, 1904-1905, undated
Organizations and societies, 1896, 1905-1908, 1915-1917, 1932-1937, undated
Peary, Robert E., 1905, 1911
Personal and family finances, 1896
Poems, undated
- BOX 76** Prohibition
 Amendment to United States Constitution, 1915, 1926-1927, undated
 Articles and papers, 1915-1918, undated
 Books, 1918, undated
 Correspondence, 1915-1921, undated
 (2 folders)
 Military cantonments, camps, and stations, undated
 Move to Evanston, Ill. (1916), 1916-1917
 National strategy, 1915
 National Temperance Council, undated
 Personal philosophy, 1916, undated
 Source material, undated
 Speeches, circa 1905, 1916-1919, 1926, 1935, undated
 United Kingdom, 1917
- BOX 77** Ranch in New Mexico, 1918-1927, undated
Scrapbook, circa 1902-circa 1908
Speeches and chatauqua lectures
 Contractual arrangements, 1915
 Engagements
 Correspondence, 1905, 1916
 Schedules, 1904-1922
 (3 folders)
 Introductions by masters of ceremonies, circa 1905, 1911,
 1917-1918, 1922, undated
 Photographs, 1909-1910, undated
 Speeches, 1903-1906, 1912-1917, 1926-1937, undated

Miscellany, 1889-1944

Container

Contents

BOX 78	Stock ownership, 1889-1894, 1930 Tributes and accolades, 1898, 1913-1914, 1920-1924, undated Women's suffrage, 1898, undated World War I Articles and papers, 1917-1918, undated Chadwick, French Ensor, 1915 Speeches, 1917-1918, 1936, undated
BOX OV 1	Oversize, circa 1898-circa 1934 Oversize material consisting mostly of charts, ship schematics, and panoramic photographs. Organized and described according to the series, folders, and boxes from which the items were removed.
BOX OV 1	Navy File Asiatic Squadron at Hong Kong, circa 1899 (Container 18) Shipyards and naval stations Foochow Navy Yard, China, circa 1899 (Container 22) Spanish-American War (1898) Spanish wrecks General Refloating techniques, circa 1898 (Container 25) Philippine Islands <i>Emperador Carlos V</i> (cruiser), circa 1899 (Container 26) Location and disposition of wrecks, circa 1898 (Container 26) Miscellany File Hull, George Huntington, Jr. Economic recovery plan Articles and papers, circa 1934 (Container 74)