

Philippe Bunau-Varilla Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2011

Contact information: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc/mss/mss.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm78014316>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc/mss/eadmss.ms011025>

Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2011

Collection Summary

Title: Philippe Bunau-Varilla Papers

Span Dates: 1877-1955

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1900-1907)

ID No.: MSS14316

Creator: Bunau-Varilla, Philippe, 1859-1940

Extent: 10,000 items

Extent: 41 containers

Extent: 14 linear feet

Language: Collection material in French and English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm78014316>

Summary: Panamanian diplomat and engineer. Correspondence, speeches, writings, legal records, newspaper clippings, and other papers concerning Bunau-Varilla's activities in the United States, his efforts to gain support for completion of the Panama Canal, and his role in the Panamanian revolution and as minister plenipotentiary for the new government.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Amador Guerrero, Manuel, 1833-1909--Correspondence.

Bigelow, John, 1817-1911--Correspondence.

Bunau-Varilla, Philippe, 1859-1940.

Burton, Theodore E. (Theodore Elijah), 1851-1929--Correspondence.

Eiffel, Gustave, 1832-1923--Correspondence.

Gorgas, William Crawford, 1854-1920--Correspondence.

Hanna, Marcus Alonzo, 1837-1904--Correspondence.

Hay, John, 1838-1905--Correspondence.

Hay, John, 1838-1905.

Jusserand, J. J. (Jean Jules), 1855-1932--Correspondence.

Lesseps, Ferdinand de, 1805-1894--Correspondence.

Lodge, Henry Cabot, 1850-1924--Correspondence.

Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919--Correspondence.

Subjects

Canals, Interoceanic.

Diplomatic and consular service, Panamanian--United States.

Volcanoes--Nicaragua.

Places

Panama Canal (Panama)

Panama--Foreign relations--United States.

Panama--History--Revolution, 1903.

Panama--Politics and government--1903-1946.

United States--Foreign relations--Panama.

Titles

Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty (1903 November 18)

Occupations

Diplomats--Panama.

Engineers.

Provenance

The papers of Philippe Bunau-Varilla, Panamanian diplomat and engineer, were given to the Library of Congress by Bunau-Varilla in 1938 and by his son, Etienne Bunau-Varilla, in 1947. Additional items were given by Charles Moore, Miles P. Duval, R. W. Hebard, and others, 1940-1979.

Processing History

The papers of Philippe Bunau-Varilla were arranged and described in 1984. The finding aid was revised in 2011.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Philippe Bunau-Varilla is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Philippe Bunau-Varilla 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, Philippe Bunau-Varilla Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

| Date | Event |
|---------------|--|
| 1859, July 26 | Born, Paris, France |
| 1880 | Graduated, École Polytechnique, Paris, France |
| 1884 | Left the French government to go to Panama as chief engineer of the three sections of the canal |
| 1885 | Chief engineer, French Transoceanic Co. of Panama under Ferdinand de Lesseps |
| 1888-1902 | Published, lectured, and negotiated in France and the United States in an effort to gain support for the completion of the Panama Canal |
| 1903 | Named minister plenipotentiary to Washington by the new Panama government; negotiated the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, which gave the United States control of the Canal Zone |
| 1916 | Devised a new system for water purification |
| 1940, May 18 | Died, Paris, France |

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Philippe Bunau-Varilla (1859-1940) span the period 1877-1955, with the bulk of the material relating to his activities in the United States, 1900-1907, and to his role in the Panamanian revolution and as minister plenipotentiary for the new government. The collection includes correspondence, speeches, writings, legal records, newspaper clippings, and other papers, much of which is in French. The papers are organized in six series: [General Correspondence](#), [Speech, Article, and Book File](#), [Legal File](#), [Miscellany](#), [Newspaper Clippings](#), and [Addition](#).

The papers contain material relating to the revolution in Panama, items concerning the Hay–Bunau-Varilla Treaty, including documents selected and annotated by Bunau-Varilla, and a note with a postal stamp illustrating volcanic activity sent from the Republic of Nicaragua to members of Congress in June 1902.

Correspondents include John Bigelow, Ferdinand de Lesseps, Henry Cabot Lodge (1850-1924), Theodore Roosevelt, Mark Hanna, John Hay, William Crawford Gorgas, Alexandre Gustave Eiffel, Theodore E. Burton, J. J. Jusserand, and Manuel Amador Guerrero.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in six series:

- [General Correspondence, 1880-1940](#)
- [Speech, Article, and Book File, 1900-1938](#)
- [Legal File, 1880-1910](#)
- [Miscellany, 1895-1955](#)
- [Newspaper Clippings, 1891-1914](#)
- [Addition, 1877-1938](#)

Description of Series

| Container | Series |
|------------------|---|
| BOX 1-13 | <u>General Correspondence, 1880-1940</u> Letters sent and received. Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 14-17 | <u>Speech, Article, and Book File, 1900-1938</u> Drafts, typescripts, notes, and miscellaneous material relating to Bunau-Varilla's speeches and writings. Arranged by type of material. |
| BOX 18-21 | <u>Legal File, 1880-1910</u> Legal records and miscellaneous material. Arranged by subject. |
| BOX 22-23 | <u>Miscellany, 1895-1955</u> Printed matter, biographical material, drawings, calling cards, invitations, notes, bills, and miscellaneous items. Arranged by type of material. |
| BOX 24-40 | <u>Newspaper Clippings, 1891-1914</u> Newspaper clippings. Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 41 | <u>Addition, 1877-1938</u> Correspondence, printed matter, newspaper clippings, and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material. |

Container List

| Container | Contents |
|------------------|--|
| BOX 1-13 | General Correspondence, 1880-1940 Letters sent and received. Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 1 | 1880-1900 (21 folders) |
| BOX 2 | 1901 |
| BOX 2 | Jan.-May 6 (folders) |
| BOX 3 | May-Dec. (10 folders) |
| BOX 4 | 1902 |
| BOX 4 | Jan.-May (9 folders) |
| BOX 5 | June-Dec. (8 folders) |
| BOX 6 | 1903, Oct.-Nov. (7 folders) |
| BOX 7 | 1903, Dec.-1904, Jan. (6 folders) |
| BOX 8 | 1904, Feb.-Sept. (10 folders) |
| BOX 9 | 1904, Oct.-1905, Mar. (7 folders) |
| BOX 10 | 1905, Apr.-Dec. (8 folders) |
| BOX 11 | 1906 |
| BOX 11 | Jan.-June 15 (6 folders) |
| BOX 12 | June 16-Dec. (8 folders) |
| BOX 13 | 1907-1940 (19 folders) |
| BOX 14-17 | Speech, Article, and Book File, 1900-1938 Drafts, typescripts, notes, and miscellaneous material relating to Bunau-Varilla's speeches and writings. Arranged by type of material. |
| BOX 14 | Books and writings |
| BOX 14 | <i>Panama, la Création, la Destruction, la Résurrection</i> , draft |
| BOX 15 | <i>De Panama à Verdun</i> , typescript |
| BOX 15 | <i>Panama, le Passé, le Présent, l'Avenir</i> |

Speech, Article, and Book File, 1900-1938

| Container | Contents |
|-----------|--|
| BOX 15 | “Comparative Characteristics of Panama and Nicaragua” |
| BOX 16-17 | Articles and lectures concerning the Panama Canal |
| BOX 18-21 | Legal File, 1880-1910 Legal records and miscellaneous material. Arranged by subject. |
| BOX 18 | French Panama canal companies |
| BOX 18-19 | <i>New York Evening Post</i> , libel suit |
| BOX 20-21 | Arbitration between Sullivan & Cromwell and La Compagnie Nouvelle du Canal de Panama |
| BOX 22-23 | Miscellany, 1895-1955 Printed matter, biographical material, drawings, calling cards, invitations, notes, bills, and miscellaneous items. Arranged by type of material. |
| BOX 22 | Printed matter concerning Bunau-Varilla and the Panama Canal |
| BOX 23 | Biographical material; Hay–Bunau-Varilla Treaty; drawings and descriptions of machinery; calling cards; unidentified manuscripts; and notes, bills, fragments, and invitations |
| BOX 24-40 | Newspaper Clippings, 1891-1914 Newspaper clippings. Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 24 | 1891-1901 |
| BOX 25 | 1901-1902 |
| BOX 26 | 1903-1905 |
| BOX 27-28 | 1905 |
| BOX 29 | 1905-1906 |
| BOX 30 | 1906 |
| BOX 31 | 1906-1907 |
| BOX 32 | 1907 |
| BOX 33-34 | 1909 |
| BOX 35 | 1910 |
| BOX 36 | 1911 |
| BOX 37 | 1912 |
| BOX 38 | 1913 |
| BOX 39 | 1914 |
| BOX 39 | Clippings concerning the Panama Canal |
| BOX 39 | Clippings concerning United States-Japanese relations, 1906 |
| BOX 41 | Addition, 1877-1938 Correspondence, printed matter, newspaper clippings, and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material. |
| BOX 41 | General correspondence, 1877-1938, undated (6 folders) |
| BOX 41 | Miscellany |

Addition, 1877-1938

| Container | Contents |
|-----------|---|
| BOX 41 | General |
| BOX 41 | <i>Les 19 Documents Clés du Drame de Panama</i> |
| BOX 41 | <i>Le Sauvetage du Canal de Panama</i> |
| BOX 41 | <i>De Panama à Verdun</i> |
| BOX 41 | <i>Panama, la Creation, la Destruction, la Resurrection</i> |
| BOX 41 | Newspaper clippings |