

Walter L. Fisher Papers

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Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff
Revised by Melinda K. Friend

Collection Summary

Title: Walter L. Fisher Papers

Span Dates: 1871-1963

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1909-1920)

ID No.: MSS20669

Creator: Fisher, Walter L. (Walter Lowrie), 1862-1935

Extent: 14,000 items ; 41 containers plus 6 oversize ; 18.8 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

Summary: Lawyer, municipal reformer, and U.S. secretary of the interior. Correspondence and memoranda, letterbooks, speeches and articles, scrapbooks, photographs, subject files, clippings, and printed matter chiefly related to Chicago, Illinois, municipal matters and to Fisher's term as United States secretary of the interior.

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

Ballinger, Richard Achilles, 1858-1922--Correspondence.

Barnard, Kate, 1875-1930--Correspondence.

Brandeis, Louis Dembitz, 1856-1941--Correspondence.

Fisher family.

Fisher, Walter L. (Walter Lowrie), 1862-1935.

Garfield, James Rudolph, 1865-1950--Correspondence.

Kent, William, 1864-1928--Correspondence.

La Follette, Robert M. (Robert Marion), 1855-1925--Correspondence.

Lane, Franklin K.--Correspondence.

MacVeagh, Franklin, 1837-1934--Correspondence.

Noyes, Frank B. (Frank Brett), 1863-1948--Correspondence.

Pinchot, Gifford, 1865-1946--Correspondence.

Rosenwald, Julius, 1862-1932--Correspondence.

Slattery, Harry, 1887-1949--Correspondence.

Taft, William H. (William Howard), 1857-1930--Correspondence.

Taft, William H. (William Howard), 1857-1930.

Tarbell, Ida M. (Ida Minerva), 1857-1944--Correspondence.

Wallace, Henry Cantwell, 1866-1924--Correspondence.

Wickersham, George W. (George Woodward), 1858-1936--Correspondence.

Woodruff, Clinton Rogers, 1868-1948--Correspondence.

Organizations

American National Live Stock Association.

League to Enforce Peace (U.S.)

Sigma Chi Fraternity.

United States. Department of the Interior.

United States. Railroad Securities Commission.

Subjects

Conservation of natural resources.

Environmental policy--United States.

Genealogy.

Greek letter societies.

Indians of North America--Oklahoma.

International cooperation.

Land use--United States.
Livestock--United States--Societies, etc.
Local transit--Illinois--Chicago.
Natural resources--United States.
Peace--Societies, etc.
Railroads--United States.

Places

Alaska--Description and travel.
Chicago (Ill.)--Politics and government--To 1950.
Hawaii--Description and travel.
Idaho--Description and travel.

Occupations

Cabinet officers.
Lawyers.
Reformers.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Walter L. Fisher, lawyer, municipal reformer, and U.S. secretary of the interior, were given to the Library of Congress in 1955 by his daughter, Margaret Fisher. An additional gift was received in 1959 from his son, Arthur Fisher. Further additions were received from another son, Walter T. Fisher, from 1964 to 1976.

Processing History

The papers of Walter L. Fisher were arranged and described in 1959. The finding aid was revised in 1985 and 2013.

Additional Guides

A note concerning the Walter L. Fisher Papers appeared in the *Library of Congress Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions* 13, no. 3 (May 1956): 150. A guide to the papers was published by the Library of Congress in 1960.

Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of Walter L. Fisher 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 Walter L. Fisher 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, Walter L. Fisher Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1862, July 4	Born, Wheeling, Va. (now West Virginia)
1878-1879	Attended Academy of Marietta College, Marietta, Ohio

1879-1886	Attended Hanover College, Hanover, Ind.; M.A., 1886
1888-1935	Admitted to bar and practiced law, Chicago, Ill.
1888-1889	Appointed special assessment attorney for Chicago, Ill.
1891	Married Mabel Taylor
1901-1906	Secretary and later president, Municipal Voters League of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.
1906-1932	Special counsel for Chicago, Ill., regarding local transportation, railway terminals, and other matters
1908-1909	President, Conservation League of America
1910-1911	Vice president, National Conservation Association
1911	Traveled to western United States and Alaska on public business
1911-1913	Secretary of the interior
1912	Traveled to Hawaii, investigating charges against the territorial government
1922	Represented Norway at Hague, Netherlands, in World War I ship case against the United States
1923-1925	Special counsel to Agriculture Department, investigating meat packing company mergers
1926-1929	Special counsel for Interstate Commerce Commission in Milwaukee Railroad receivership investigation and O'Fallon Railway rate case
1935, Nov. 9	Died, Winnetka, Ill.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Walter Lowrie Fisher (1862-1935) span the years 1871-1963, with the bulk concentrated in the period 1909-1920. The two subjects that dominate the material in the collection are Chicago, Illinois, municipal affairs and Fisher's incumbency as secretary of the interior under President William H. Taft. The papers are organized into the following series: [General Correspondence](#), [Letterbooks](#), [Secretary's Private Files](#), [Subject File](#), [Speech and Article File](#), [Miscellany](#), [Photograph Album and Scrapbooks](#), [Clippings](#), and [Printed Matter](#).

The [General Correspondence](#) and [Letterbooks](#) cover the Chicago phase of Fisher's career, his term as secretary of the interior, and beyond. Correspondents include Kate Barnard, Louis Dembitz Brandeis, James Rudolph Garfield, William Kent, Robert M. La Follette (1855-1925), Franklin K. Lane, Franklin MacVeagh, Frank B. Noyes, Gifford Pinchot, Julius Rosenwald, Harry Slattry, William H. Taft, Ida M. Tarbell, Henry Cantwell Wallace, George W. Wickersham, and Clinton Rogers Woodruff.

The [Secretary's Private Files](#) contain personal and professional papers kept during Fisher's term as secretary of the interior. Topics include investments, engagements, his homes, the Railroad Securities Commission, and his membership in various conservation and reform associations. Correspondents include President Taft, cabinet members, and his predecessor, Richard Achilles Ballinger. Further materials relating to the Department of Interior and Fisher's official trips to Alaska and Hawaii are located in the [Clippings](#) and the [Printed Matter](#). Memoranda from the Department of Interior are in the [Subject](#)

File. A photograph album from 1911 documents a trip to Twin Falls, Idaho. Fisher's interest in Chicago continued while he was in Washington, D.C., and many of the files kept by his office staff pertain exclusively to Chicago matters.

The Subject File contains material related to conservation, the American National Livestock Association, the League to Enforce Peace, Oklahoma Indians, and the Sigma Chi Fraternity. Included also are legal cases and the Chicago, Illinois, traction ordinances dispute of 1903-1905.

A typescript of an autobiographical note prepared circa 1932 appears in the Speech and Article File along with college themes, articles, and speeches spanning his career. A dissertation written on Fisher in 1963 is included in Miscellany.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in nine series:

- General Correspondence, 1889-1935
- Letterbooks, 1896-1923
- Secretary's Private Files, 1911-1913
- Subject File, 1871-1936
- Speech and Article File, 1880-circa 1932
- Miscellany, 1883-1963
- Photograph Album and Scrapbooks, 1879-1911
- Clippings, 1888-1935
- Printed Matter, 1883-circa 1930

Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1-5	<u>General Correspondence, 1889-1935</u> Letters sent and received. Arranged chronologically.
BOX OV 6-OV 8	<u>Letterbooks, 1896-1923</u> Ten volumes of letterpress copies of correspondence originating in Fisher's Chicago, Ill., office. Volumes are indexed individually. Arranged chronologically within volumes with some overlapping dates.
BOX 9-21	<u>Secretary's Private Files, 1911-1913</u> Correspondence files including clippings, memoranda, notes, and receipts. Arranged according to a system devised by Fisher and including an index.
BOX 21-22	<u>Subject File, 1871-1936</u> Correspondence, memoranda, reports, minutes, printed and near-print material. Arranged alphabetically by subject. There is little arrangement within folders.
BOX 23-24	<u>Speech and Article File, 1880-circa 1932</u> Manuscript and typed copies of college themes, speeches, articles, and an autobiographical note. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 24	<u>Miscellany, 1883-1963</u> Calling and greeting cards, Fisher family genealogy, memorabilia, photographs, and a dissertation. Arranged by type of material.
BOX OV 25-OV 26	<u>Photograph Album and Scrapbooks, 1879-1911</u> Photograph album from Twin Falls, Idaho, and memorabilia mounted in two large scrapbooks. Arranged by type of material. Scrapbooks follow a rough chronological arrangement within volumes with overlapping dates between the volumes.
BOX 27-31	<u>Clippings, 1888-1935</u> Newspaper clippings relating to Fisher and other topics. Arranged as received.
BOX 32-OV 47	<u>Printed Matter, 1883-circa 1930</u> Articles, speeches, reports, and pamphlets. Arranged by type of material or topic.

Container List

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BOX 5	1919-1935, undated
BOX OV 6-OV 8	Letterbooks, 1896-1923 Ten volumes of letterpress copies of correspondence originating in Fisher's Chicago, Ill., office. Volumes are indexed individually. Arranged chronologically within volumes with some overlapping dates.
BOX OV 6	1896-1910
BOX OV 7	1907-1911
BOX OV 8	1913-1923
BOX 9-21	Secretary's Private Files, 1911-1913 Correspondence files including clippings, memoranda, notes, and receipts. Arranged according to a system devised by Fisher and including an index.
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Secretary's Private Files, 1911-1913

Container

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Secretary's Private Files, 1911-1913

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Speech and Article File, 1880-circa 1932

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Printed Matter, 1883-circa 1930

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