

**Nelson T. Johnson Papers**  
**A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress**



**Manuscript Division, Library of Congress**  
**Washington, D.C.**  
**2023**

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm78027912>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms012128>

Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2012  
Revised 2023 June

## Collection Summary

**Title:** Nelson T. Johnson Papers

**Inclusive Dates:** 1916-1955

**Bulk Dates:** 1922-1954

**ID No.:** MSS27912

**Creator:** Johnson, Nelson T. (Nelson Trusler), 1887-1954

**Extent:** 22,400 items

**Extent:** 70 containers plus 5 oversize

**Extent:** 21.2 linear feet

**Language:** Collection material in English

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

**LC Catalog record:** <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm78027912>

**Summary:** U.S. assistant secretary of state, minister and ambassador to China and minister to Australia. Personal correspondence, memoranda of conversations and engagement books, speeches and writings, and other material chiefly relating to Johnson's diplomatic service in China, Australia, and east Asia.

## 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

Cunningham, Edwin Sheddan, 1868-1953--Correspondence.  
Dulles, John Foster, 1888-1959--Correspondence.  
Grew, Joseph C. (Joseph Clark), 1880-1965--Correspondence.  
Hornbeck, Stanley Kuhl, 1883-1966--Correspondence.  
Howard, Roy Wilson, 1883-1964--Correspondence.  
Hull, Cordell, 1871-1955--Correspondence.  
Johnson, Nelson T. (Nelson Trusler), 1887-1954.  
Killearn, Miles Lampson, Baron, 1880-1964--Correspondence.  
Lamont, Thomas W. (Thomas William), 1870-1948--Correspondence.  
Lattimore, Owen, 1900-1989--Correspondence.  
Morgenthau, Henry, 1891-1967--Correspondence.  
Sayre, Francis Bowes, 1885-1972--Correspondence.

### Organizations

Far Eastern Commission.  
United States. Department of State.  
Zhongguo gong chan dang.  
Zhongguo guo min dang.

### Subjects

Communism--China.  
Diplomatic and consular service, American--Australia.  
Diplomatic and consular service, American--China.  
Diplomatic and consular service, American--East Asia.  
Japanese--China--Manchuria.  
Sino-Japanese Conflict, 1931-1933.  
Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945.  
World War, 1939-1945--Australia.

### Places

Australia--Foreign relations--United States.  
China--Foreign relations--United States.

China--History--Republic, 1912-1949.  
East Asia--Foreign relations--United States.  
Japan--History--1926-1945.  
Manchuria (China)--History.  
United States--Foreign relations--Australia.  
United States--Foreign relations--China.  
United States--Foreign relations--East Asia.

### **Occupations**

Diplomats.  
Public officials.

## **Acquisition Information**

The papers of Nelson T. Johnson were given to the Library of Congress by Johnson in 1954. Additions were received as gifts from his wife, Jane Thornton Beck, in 1967, 1971, and 1987.

## **Processing History**

The papers of Nelson T. Johnson were arranged and described by Grover Batts in 1971 and revised and expanded by Grover Batts in 1975 and by Connie L. Cartledge in 1987. The finding aid was revised again in 2012. The finding aid was updated in 2023 by Maria Farmer as part of a division-wide remediation project by the Inclusive Description Working Group.

## **Copyright Status**

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

## **Access and Restrictions**

The papers of Nelson T. Johnson 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, Nelson T. Johnson Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## **Biographical Note**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
1887, Apr. 3	Born, Washington, D. C.
1906-1907	Attended George Washington University, Washington, D.C.
1907-1909	Student interpreter in China
1909-1910	Deputy consul general and interpreter, Mukden, China
1910-1911	Deputy consul general and interpreter, Hankow, China
1911-1914	Deputy consul general and interpreter, Shanghai, China
1914-1915	Consul, Chungking, China
1915-1918	Consul, Changsha, China

1918	Consul, Shanghai, China
1919-1921	Served with Division of Far Eastern Affairs, Department of State
1921-1925	Consul general at large assigned to inspect the District of Eastern Asia
1925-1927	Chief, Division of Far Eastern Affairs, Department of State
1927-1929	Assistant secretary of state
1929-1935	United States minister to China
1931	Married Jane Thornton Beck (died 1991)
1935-1941	United States ambassador to China
1941-1946	United States minister to Australia
1946-1952	Secretary general, Far Eastern Commission
1954, Dec. 3	Died, Washington, D.C

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of Nelson Trusler Johnson (1887-1954) span the years 1916-1955, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1922-1954. Included in addition to personal correspondence are memoranda of conversations, engagement books and desk calendars, articles and speeches, and other material relating to Johnson's diplomatic service with the State Department in China, Australia, and east Asia from 1922 to 1952, including as ambassador to China and secretary general of the Far Eastern Commission. The collection is organized into seven series: [Appointment Books](#), [General Correspondence](#), [Memoranda of Conversations](#), [Subject File](#), [Miscellany](#), [Addition](#), and [Oversize](#).

The main body of the correspondence begins with Johnson's departure for east Asia in 1922 as consul general at large assigned to inspect the District of Eastern Asia. Featured as backdrop to his career is an in-depth portrait of China during the early phase of the civil war between the Communist (Zhongguo gong chan dang) and Kuomintang (Zhongguo guo min dang) parties, 1926-1941, the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, and the Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945. In addition, there is substantial correspondence documenting Johnson's service as United States minister to Australia during World War II and his service as secretary general of the Far Eastern Commission, 1946-1952.

Prominent correspondents include Edwin Sheddan Cunningham; John Foster Dulles; Joseph C. Grew; Stanley Kuhl Hornbeck; Roy Wilson Howard; Cordell Hull; Thomas W. Lamont; Miles Lampson, Baron Killearn; Owen Lattimore; Henry Morgenthau (1891-1967); and Francis Bowes Sayre (1885-1972).

The [Addition](#) series complements the main portion of the collection, including particularly a significant volume of correspondence with Stanley Kuhl Hornbeck and subject files relating to the Far East Commission.

## Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in seven series:

- [Appointment Books, 1928-1950](#)
- [General Correspondence, 1916-1954](#)
- [Memoranda of Conversations, 1927-1935](#)
- [Subject File, 1920-1945](#)
- [Miscellany, 1920-1953](#)
- [Addition, 1919-1955](#)
- [Oversize](#)

## Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-2	<p><b><u>Appointment Books, 1928-1950</u></b> Bound volumes and loose appointment sheets. Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 3-47	<p><b><u>General Correspondence, 1916-1954</u></b> Letters sent and received. Organized into bound and unbound files and therein chronologically by year and then alphabetically by name of correspondent.</p>
BOX 48-55	<p><b><u>Memoranda of Conversations, 1927-1935</u></b> Memoranda of conversations with diplomats and others. Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 56-61	<p><b><u>Subject File, 1920-1945</u></b> Correspondence and printed matter relating to the Far East. Arranged by topic, assignment, or name of organization.</p>
BOX 62-64	<p><b><u>Miscellany, 1920-1953</u></b> Book reviews, speeches, newspaper clippings, and material relating to diplomatic appointments. Organized by type of material.</p>
BOX 65-70	<p><b><u>Addition, 1919-1955</u></b> Correspondence, memoranda of conversations, a subject file, and miscellany, including speeches and writings, printed matter, reports, and other material. Arranged by type of material.</p>
BOX OV 1-OV 5	<p><b><u>Oversize</u></b> Diplomatic appointment material. Described according to the series and container from which it was removed.</p>

# Container List

<b>Container</b>	<b>Contents</b>
<b>BOX 1-2</b>	<b>Appointment Books, 1928-1950</b> Bound volumes and loose appointment sheets. Arranged chronologically.
<b>BOX 1</b>	1928-1935
<b>BOX 2</b>	1948-1950
<b>BOX 3-47</b>	<b>General Correspondence, 1916-1954</b> Letters sent and received. Organized into bound and unbound files and therein chronologically by year and then alphabetically by name of correspondent.
<b>BOX 3</b>	Bound
<b>BOX 3</b>	1916-1925
<b>BOX 4</b>	1925-1926
<b>BOX 5</b>	1927
<b>BOX 5</b>	A-L
<b>BOX 6</b>	M-Z
<b>BOX 7</b>	1928
<b>BOX 7</b>	A-C
<b>BOX 8</b>	D-L
<b>BOX 9</b>	M-Z
<b>BOX 10</b>	1929
<b>BOX 10</b>	A-G
<b>BOX 11</b>	H-N
<b>BOX 12</b>	O-Z
<b>BOX 13</b>	1930
<b>BOX 13</b>	A-H
<b>BOX 14</b>	H-Z
<b>BOX 15</b>	1931
<b>BOX 15</b>	A-H
<b>BOX 16</b>	H-Z
<b>BOX 17</b>	1932
<b>BOX 17</b>	A-L
<b>BOX 18</b>	M-Z
<b>BOX 19</b>	1933
<b>BOX 19</b>	A-G
<b>BOX 20</b>	H-N
<b>BOX 21</b>	O-Z
<b>BOX 22</b>	1934
<b>BOX 22</b>	A-G
<b>BOX 23</b>	G-M

## General Correspondence, 1916-1954

Container	Contents
BOX 24	Mc-Z
BOX 25	1935
BOX 25	A-C
BOX 26	D-K
BOX 27	L-Z
BOX 28	1936
BOX 28	A-E
BOX 29	F-L
BOX 30	M-Z
BOX 31	1937
BOX 31	A-K
BOX 32	L-Y
BOX 33	Unbound
BOX 33	1936-1937
BOX 34	1938, A-K
BOX 35	1938, L-1939, B
BOX 36	1939, C-M
BOX 37	1939, N-1940, J
BOX 38	1940, K-1941, F
BOX 39	1941, G-V
BOX 40	1941, W-1942, N
BOX 41	1942, O-1943, F
BOX 42	1943
BOX 42	G-T
BOX 43	U-Z
BOX 43	1946
BOX 44	1947-1948
BOX 45	1949-1950
BOX 46	1951-1952
BOX 47	1953-1954
BOX 48-55	<b>Memoranda of Conversations, 1927-1935</b> Memoranda of conversations with diplomats and others. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 48	1927-1928
BOX 49	1929
BOX 50	1930
BOX 51	1931
BOX 52	1932
BOX 53	1933
BOX 54	1934
BOX 55	1935
BOX 56-61	<b>Subject File, 1920-1945</b> Correspondence and printed matter relating to the Far East. Arranged by topic, assignment, or name of organization.

## Subject File, 1920-1945

### Container

### Contents

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BOX 56	China miscellany, 1920-1929
BOX 57	Japan miscellany, 1941, 1945
BOX 58	Department of State, 1923-1929
BOX 59	Inspection tour of Australia, China, and Japan, 1923-1925
BOX 60	Foreign Service inspection tour, 1924-1928
BOX 61	International settlement at Shanghai, China
BOX 62-64	<b>Miscellany, 1920-1953</b> Book reviews, speeches, newspaper clippings, and material relating to diplomatic appointments. Organized by type of material.
BOX 62	Book review
BOX 62	Speeches
BOX 63	Speeches
BOX 64	Speeches
BOX 64	Newspaper clippings, 1936-1943
BOX 64	Diplomatic appointments <i>See Oversize</i>
BOX 65-70	<b>Addition, 1919-1955</b> Correspondence, memoranda of conversations, a subject file, and miscellany, including speeches and writings, printed matter, reports, and other material. Arranged by type of material.
BOX 65	Correspondence
BOX 65	Hornbeck, Stanley, 1937-1944 (6 folders)
BOX 65	General
BOX 65	1944
BOX 65	"A" miscellaneous
BOX 66	"B-N" miscellaneous (12 folders)
BOX 67	"O-Z" miscellaneous (7 folders)
BOX 67	1946-1952, "W" miscellaneous (3 folders)
BOX 67	1919-1950, "A-Z," miscellaneous (5 folders)
BOX 67	Memoranda of conversations, 1936-1937
BOX 67	A-C (4 folders)
BOX 68	E-Z and miscellaneous (18 folders)
BOX 68	Subject file
BOX 68	American Consular Service: Chamber of Commerce of Changsha, 1916
BOX 68	Amoy, China, consulate, 1922-1923
BOX 68	China



## Addition, 1919-1955

Container	Contents
BOX 68	1918
BOX 68	1953, China, "Free China's Counter Attack," by Wang Tao
BOX 68	Cosmos Club, Washington, D.C., 1952-1954
BOX 68	Far Eastern Commission
BOX 68	Miscellaneous, 1945-1952 (2 folders)
BOX 68	American treaty rights with China, 1927 (2 folders)
BOX 68	China, problems of United States policy, 1949
BOX 68	"Conduct and Contacts Abroad," 1946-1947
BOX 69	Russia and China, 1949-1950
BOX 69	Russia clippings, 1945-1948
BOX 69	Salisbury, 1946-1948
BOX 69	"Source of China's Wealth," 1950
BOX 69	Stalin, Joseph, statement on textbook of political economy, 1952
BOX 69	Stiver, Michael L., 1946-1947
BOX 69	Studart, J. Leighton, 1946, 1951
BOX 69	Syracuse-Colgate University Conference on Foreign Policy, 1950-1951
BOX 69	United States, 1949-1950
BOX 69	Yalta, 1950-1952
BOX 69	Warnshuis, A. L., 1946
BOX 69	Foreign Service Training Program, 1946-1951
BOX 69	Gallaudet College, Washington, D.C., 1951-1954
BOX 69	Institute of Current World Affairs, 1945-1948, 1954
BOX 69	Japan, 1919, 1945
BOX 69	Manchuria, 1945-1946
BOX 69	National Geographic Society, 1909-1910, 1937
BOX 69	Newcastle-on-Tyne Incident, 1922-1923
BOX 69	Peking and the Imperial Palace, 1931
BOX 69	Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Foundation, 1948
BOX 69	Regents Committee on International Understandings, New York, 1950-1951
BOX 70	Russia returns to Manchuria and the part the United States played
BOX 70	Shigemitsu, 1948
BOX 70	Sidwell Friends School, Washington, D.C. 1946-1953
BOX 70	1949, Cum Laude Society
BOX 70	Miscellany, 1936-1955
BOX 70	Speeches (3 folders)
BOX 70	Book reviews (2 folders)
BOX 70	Writings
BOX 70	By Johnson (5 folders)

## Addition, 1919-1955

<b>Container</b>	<b>Contents</b>
BOX 70	By others (3 folders)
BOX OV 1-OV 5	<b>Oversize</b> Diplomatic appointment material. Described according to the series and container from which it was removed.
BOX OV 1-OV 5	Miscellany
BOX OV 1-OV 5	Diplomatic appointments (Container 64)