

George W. Goethals Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2021

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm80023002>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms013029>

Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2013
Revised 2024 February

Collection Summary

Title: George W. Goethals Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1830-2014

Bulk Dates: 1907-1927

ID No.: MSS23002

Creator: Goethals, George W. (George Washington), 1858-1928

Creator: Goethals family

Extent: 31,500 items

Extent: 73 containers plus 1 oversize

Extent: 27.2 linear feet

Extent: 1 microfilm reel

Extent: 81 digital files (21.36 MB)

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm80023002>

Summary: Governor of the Canal Zone, army officer, and engineer. Diaries, correspondence, reports, memoranda, photographs, clippings, family papers, and scrapbooks relating chiefly to the construction of the Panama Canal, Goethals' term as governor of the Canal Zone, his other public service positions, and the Goethals family.

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

Baker, Newton Diehl, 1871-1937--Correspondence.
Barrett, John, 1866-1938--Correspondence.
Bishop, Joseph Bucklin, 1847-1928--Correspondence.
Bixby, William Herbert, 1849-1928--Correspondence.
Bloom, Sol, 1870-1949--Correspondence.
Bok, Edward William, 1863-1930--Correspondence.
Borah, William Edgar, 1865-1940--Correspondence.
Daniels, Josephus, 1862-1948--Correspondence.
Denby, Edwin, 1870-1929--Correspondence.
Garrison, Lindley M. (Lindley Miller), 1864-1932--Correspondence.
Goethals family--Genealogy.
Goethals family.
Goethals, Effie Rodman, 1858-1942--Correspondence.
Goethals, George Rodman, 1886-1973--Correspondence.
Goethals, George W. (George Washington), 1858-1928.
Goethals, Mary Addison Webb, 1892-1985--Correspondence.
Goethals, Thomas R., Jr. Thomas R. Goethals Jr. papers.
Goethals, Thomas Rodman, 1890-1962--Correspondence.
Gorgas, William Crawford, 1854-1920--Correspondence.
Greely, A. W. (Adolphus Washington), 1844-1935--Correspondence.
Harding, Chester, 1866-1936--Correspondence.
Hodges, Harry F. (Harry Foot), 1860-1929--Correspondence.
Lansing, Robert, 1864-1928--Correspondence.
Lodge, Henry Cabot, 1850-1924--Correspondence.
Loeb, William, Jr., 1866-1937--Correspondence.
Lorenze, M. O.--Correspondence.
Mahan, A. T. (Alfred Thayer), 1840-1914--Correspondence.
Pershing, John J. (John Joseph), 1860-1948--Correspondence.

Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945--Correspondence.
Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919--Correspondence.
Sayre, Francis Bowes, 1885-1972--Correspondence.
Sibert, William L. (William Luther), 1860-1935--Correspondence.
Stimson, Henry L. (Henry Lewis), 1867-1950--Correspondence.
Taft, William H. (William Howard), 1857-1930--Correspondence.
Tumulty, Joseph P. (Joseph Patrick), 1879-1954--Correspondence.
Wilson, Woodrow, 1856-1924--Correspondence.

Organizations

Canal Zone. Office of the Governor.
United States Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation.
United States. Army. General Hospital, 6th.

Subjects

Anthracite coal industry--Pennsylvania.
Canals--Panama.
Eight-hour movement--United States.
Fuel trade--United States.
Labor laws and legislation--United States.
Merchant marine--United States.
Railroads--Employees.
Strikes and lockouts--Pennsylvania.
World War, 1914-1918--Medical care.
World War, 1939-1945--Hospitals.
World War, 1939-1945--Medical care.

Places

Canal Zone--History--20th century.
Panama Canal (Panama)--History.
Panama Canal (Panama)--Politics and government.

Occupations

Army officers.
Engineers.
Governors--Canal Zone.

Acquisition Information

The papers of George W. Goethals, governor of the Canal Zone, army officer, and engineer, were deposited in the Library of Congress in 1932 and converted to a gift in 1939 by his sons, George R. Goethals and Thomas R. Goethals. Additions were received in 1939, 1947, 1954, and 2016 as gifts from George R. Goethals and Thomas R. Goethals, Leslie C. McNemar, Maurice J. Thatcher, and Thomas R. Goethals Jr., respectively.

Processing History

The papers of George W. Goethals were processed in 1962. The finding aid was revised in 2012. An addition to the collection was processed in 2021 by Michael Folkerts.

Digital files were received as part of the 2021 addition to the George W. Goethals on a USB flash drive, which was assigned a unique digital ID number. Use the digital ID number to request access copies of the files associated with each media. A description of the standard processes taken on all born digital records can be found in the Processing History Note: Born Digital Collection Material at <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc/mss/eadmss.digital>.

Transfers

Original sheet music has been transferred to the Music Division where it is identified as part of the George W. Goethals Papers. Patrons are encouraged to contact the Music Division in advance of a research visit.

Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of George W. Goethals in these papers and in other collections of papers in the custody of the Library of Congress is reserved by the donors during their lifetime and thereafter dedicated to the public.

Access and Restrictions

The papers of George W. Goethals 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. Access to digital content is available onsite only in the Manuscript Reading Room and requires advanced notice. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting.

Technical Requirements

Digital files were created in a Windows operating system, version is unknown. The content is entirely .docx and .pdf formats.

Microfilm

A microfilm edition of part of these papers is available on one reel. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan. To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the microfilm edition as available.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container, reel, or digital ID number, George W. Goethals Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1858, 29 June	Born, Brooklyn, N.Y.
1880	Graduated, United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.
1880-1882	Student officer, Engineering School of Application, Willets Point, N.Y.
1882-1884	Engineer officer, Department of Columbia, Vancouver, Wash.
1884	Married Josephine "Effie" Rodman
1884-1885	Engineer officer, improvements on the Ohio River for navigation, Cincinnati, Ohio
1885-1889	Instructor and assistant professor of civil and military engineering, United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.
1889-1894	Engineer officer, improvements on the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers, and in charge of completion of the Muscle Shoals Canal and construction of the Colbert Shoals Lock, Nashville, Tenn. and Florence, Ala.
1894-1898	Assistant to chief of engineers, United States Army, Washington D.C.

1898	Chief engineer, First United States Army Corps, Chickamauga Park, Ga. and campaign in Puerto Rico
1898-1900	Instructor of practical military engineering, United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.
1900-1903	Engineer officer in charge of river and harbor works, Block Island to Nantucket, and the fortifications of Narragansett Bay and New Bedford, Mass.
1903-1907	Member, General Staff, United States Army
1905	Graduated, United States Army War College
	Accompanied Secretary of War William H. Taft on an inspection trip to the Isthmus of Panama
1907	Appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt as chairman and chief engineer, Isthmian Canal Commission
1907-1914	Chief engineer, construction of the Panama Canal
1909	Promoted to colonel, United States Army
1914-1917	Governor, Panama Canal Zone
1915	Promoted to major general, United States Army
1916	Chairman of the board appointed to report on the Adamson Eight-Hour Law
1917	General manager, United States Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corp. Acting quartermaster general, United States Army
1918	Chief, Division of Purchase, Storage and Traffic, United States Army Awarded Distinguished Service Medal for meritorious service in reorganizing the Quartermaster Department, United States Army
1919-1923	President and head engineer, George W. Goethals and Co., New York, N.Y.
1922	Fuel administrator of New York during anthracite coal miner's strike
1923-1928	Consulting engineer on projects such as Inner Harbor Navigation Canal, New Orleans, La.; Columbia Basin Irrigation Project; East Bay Municipal Utility District of Oakland, Calif; and Lake Worth Inlet District in Florida. Chief consulting engineer, New York-Jersey Port and Harbor Commission (later Port of New York Authority)
1928, Jan. 21	Died, New York, N.Y.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of George Washington Goethals (1858-1928) span the years 1830-2014, with the bulk of the material originating between 1907 and 1927. The collection includes desk diaries, family and general correspondence, reports, memoranda, photographs, clippings, family papers, and scrapbooks. The papers are organized into eight series: [Desk Diaries](#), [Family Correspondence](#), [General Correspondence](#), [Subject File](#), [Miscellany](#), [Scrapbooks](#), [2021 Addition](#), and [Oversize](#). The two series of correspondence dominate the collection.

The major portion of the collection concerns Goethals and the construction of the Panama Canal and his term as governor of the Panama Canal Zone. The remainder relates briefly to his service as general manager of the United States Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation, his chairmanship of the board appointed to report on the Adamson Eight-Hour Law, and his tenure as fuel administrator of New York during the 1922 anthracite coal miner's strike.

Prominent correspondents include Newton Diehl Baker, John Barrett, Joseph Bucklin Bishop, William Herbert Bixby, Sol Bloom, Edward William Bok, William Edgar Borah, Josephus Daniels, Edwin Denby, Lindley M. Garrison, William Crawford Gorgas, A. W. Greely, Chester Harding, Harry F. Hodges, Robert Lansing, Henry Cabot Lodge (1850-1924), William Loeb Jr., M. O. Lorenze, Alfred Thayer Mahan, John J. Pershing, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt, Francis Bowes Sayre (1885-1972), William L. Sibert, Henry L. Stimson, William H. Taft, Joseph P. Tumulty, and Woodrow Wilson. The correspondence to and from Woodrow Wilson is found in the [Subject File](#) concerning the United States Shipping Board.

The [2021 Addition](#) was donated by Thomas R. Goethals Jr., grandson of George W. Goethals, and is split between two major groupings. The family papers contain primarily correspondence between family members George W. Goethals and his wife Effie Rodman Goethals, their sons George Rodman Goethals and Thomas Rodman Goethals, and Thomas' wife Mary Addison Webb Goethals. A significant portion of the family papers belong to Thomas Rodman Goethals, who served

as a medic in World War I and the commanding officer of the Sixth General Hospital during World War II. Of particular interest is a handwritten manuscript detailing the history of the Sixth General Hospital's activation and organization alongside the extensive correspondence between him and his father. The second grouping of the [2021 Addition](#) contains the papers of Thomas R. Goethals Jr. The majority of these papers were collected in service of an unpublished biography written by Thomas R. Goethals Jr. for his grandfather, George W. Goethals, and includes the drafts of the biography, research, and genealogy on the Goethals family. Additional material includes correspondence, other writings on the Panama Canal and George W. Goethals, and records of donations of family papers to various institutions.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in eight series:

- [Desk Diaries, 1918-1919](#)
- [Family Correspondence, 1890-1927](#)
- [General Correspondence, 1904-1929](#)
- [Subject File, 1908-1929](#)
- [Miscellany, 1908-1947](#)
- [Scrapbooks, 1909-1954](#)
- [2021 Addition, 1830-2014](#)
- [Oversize, 1928](#)

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-2	<p><u>Desk Diaries, 1918-1919</u></p> <p>Daily entries in loose-leaf volumes. Arranged chronologically. <i>Also on negative microfilm, shelf no. 14,006</i></p>
BOX 3-4	<p><u>Family Correspondence, 1890-1927</u></p> <p>Correspondence between Goethals and his son, George R. Goethals. Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 5-41	<p><u>General Correspondence, 1904-1929</u></p> <p>Letters sent and received. Arranged by years and alphabetically therein. An index to the correspondence for the period 1907-1917 is filed at the end of the series.</p>
BOX 42-45	<p><u>Subject File, 1908-1929</u></p> <p>Correspondence, memoranda, reports, maps, blueprints, photocopies, clippings, and printed matter. Arranged by subject.</p>
BOX 46-47	<p><u>Miscellany, 1908-1947</u></p> <p>Memoranda, speeches, invitations, calling cards, maps, blueprints, memorabilia, financial papers, printed matter, clippings, and photographs. Arranged by type of material.</p>
BOX 48-50	<p><u>Scrapbooks, 1909-1954</u></p> <p>Photographs, correspondence, memoranda, and mounted newspaper clippings. No arrangement.</p>
BOX 51-73	<p><u>2021 Addition, 1830-2014</u></p> <p>Correspondence, memoranda, writings, and research gathered by Thomas R. Goethals Jr., grandson of George W. Goethals. Arranged into two groupings: Family papers and the papers of Thomas R. Goethals Jr. Arranged alphabetically within by name or type of material, respectively. File structure of the digital content maintained as received.</p>
BOX OV 1	<p><u>Oversize, 1928</u></p> <p>Scrapbook. Described according to the series and container from which it was removed.</p>

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1-2	Desk Diaries, 1918-1919 Daily entries in loose-leaf volumes. Arranged chronologically. <i>Also on negative microfilm, shelf no. 14,006</i>
BOX 1	1918
BOX 2	1919
BOX 3-4	Family Correspondence, 1890-1927 Correspondence between Goethals and his son, George R. Goethals. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 3	1890-1915
BOX 4	1916-1927
BOX 5-41	General Correspondence, 1904-1929 Letters sent and received. Arranged by years and alphabetically therein. An index to the correspondence for the period 1907-1917 is filed at the end of the series.
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General Correspondence, 1904-1929

Container	Contents
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BOX 42-45	Subject File, 1908-1929 Correspondence, memoranda, reports, maps, blueprints, photocopies, clippings, and printed matter. Arranged by subject.
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BOX 44	American Academy of Engineers, 1916-1917
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BOX 45	New York Fuel Administration, 1923
BOX 45	New York water supply, 1916-1917
BOX 46-47	Miscellany, 1908-1947 Memoranda, speeches, invitations, calling cards, maps, blueprints, memorabilia, financial papers, printed matter, clippings, and photographs. Arranged by type of material.
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BOX 51-73	2021 Addition, 1830-2014 Correspondence, memoranda, writings, and research gathered by Thomas R. Goethals Jr., grandson of George W. Goethals. Arranged into two groupings: Family papers and the papers of Thomas R. Goethals Jr. Arranged alphabetically within by name or type of material, respectively. File structure of the digital content maintained as received.
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Oversize, 1928

Container Contents

BOX OV 1 Scrapbooks
BOX OV 1 1928 (Container 50)