**Collection Summary**

**Title:** David E. Finley Papers  
**Span Dates:** 1921-1977  
**ID No.:** MSS57414  
**Creator:** Finley, David E. (David Edwards)  
**Extent:** 31,000 items  
**Extent:** 92 containers  
**Extent:** 36 linear feet  
**Language:** Collection material in English  
**Location:** Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.  
**LC Catalog record:** [https://lccn.loc.gov/mm81057414](https://lccn.loc.gov/mm81057414)  

**Summary:** Museum director and lawyer. Correspondence, subject files, financial papers, drafts of speeches and writings, family material, printed matter, and scrapbooks relating chiefly to Finley's duties as special assistant to Secretary of the Treasury, Andrew W. Mellon, his role in the founding and his subsequent service as director of the National Gallery of Art, and his activities with numerous other artistic and cultural organizations.

**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**
Beale, Marie Oge, 1880-1956--Correspondence.  
Biddle, George, 1885-1973--Correspondence.  
Biddle, James, 1929-2005--Correspondence.  
Bullock, Helen Duprey, 1904-1995--Correspondence.  
Cairns, Huntington, 1904-1985--Correspondence.  
Carmichael, Leonard, 1898-1973--Correspondence.  
Conger, Clement E.--Correspondence.  
Cortissoz, Royal, 1869-1948--Correspondence.  
Couzens, James, 1872-1936.  
Dale, Chester, 1883-1962--Art collections.  
Dale, Chester, 1883-1962--Correspondence.  
Douglas, Lewis W. (Lewis Williams), 1894-1974--Correspondence.  
Du Pont, Henry Francis, 1880-1969--Correspondence.  
Finley family.  
Finley, David E. (David Edward)  
Fraser, James Earle, 1876-1953--Correspondence.  
Garbisch, Edgar William--Correspondence.  
Green, Theodore Francis, 1867-1966--Correspondence.  
Hancock, Walker Kirtland, 1901-1998--Correspondence.  
Hoover, Herbert, 1874-1964--Correspondence.  
Kennedy, John F. (John Fitzgerald), 1917-1963--Correspondence.  
Kirstein, Lincoln, 1907-1996--Correspondence.  
Kress, Samuel H. (Samuel Henry), 1863-1955--Correspondence.  
Lewis, W. S. (Wilmarth Sheldon), 1895-1979--Correspondence.  
Manship, Paul, 1885-1966--Correspondence.  
Mellon, Paul--Correspondence.  
Nagel, Charles, 1849-1940--Correspondence.
Onassis, Jacqueline Kennedy, 1929-1994--Correspondence.
Phillips, Duncan, 1886-1966--Correspondence.
Ripley, S. Dillon (Sidney Dillon), 1913-2001--Correspondence.
Roosevelt, Eleanor, 1884-1962--Correspondence.
Rosenwald, Lessing J. (Lessing Julius), 1891-1979--Correspondence.
Stone, Harlan Fiske, 1872-1946--Correspondence.
Taylor, Francis Henry, 1903-1957--Correspondence.
Truman, Harry S., 1884-1972--Correspondence.
Walker, John, 1906-1995--Correspondence.
Widener, Joseph E. (Joseph Early), 1872-1943--Art collections.
Widener, Joseph E. (Joseph Early), 1872-1943--Correspondence.
Wyeth, Andrew, 1917-2009--Correspondence.

Organizations
Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art.
Decatur House (Washington, D.C.)
National Gallery of Art (U.S.)
National Portrait Gallery (Smithsonian Institution)
National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States.
People-to-People (Organization)
Unesco.
United States. Department of the Treasury.
Wayside Inn (Sudbury, Mass.)
White House (Washington, D.C.)

Subjects
Architecture--Washington (D.C.)
Art museums--Washington (D.C.)
Art--Washington (D.C.)
Art.
Arts--United States.
Debts, Public--United States.
Embassy buildings--United States.
Historic preservation--United States.
Taxation--United States.
World War, 1914-1918--Finance.
World War, 1939-1945--Art and the war.

Places
United States--Economic policy--20th century.

Occupations
Lawyers.
Museum directors.

Provenance
The papers of David E. Finley, museum director and lawyer, were bequeathed to the Library of Congress by Finley in 1977.

Processing History
The Finley Papers were processed in 1982. The finding aid was revised in 2012.
Transfers

Items have been transferred from the Manuscript Division to other custodial divisions of the Library. Maps have been transferred to the Geography and Map Division. Photographs and other pictorial material have been transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division. All transfers are identified in these divisions as part of the David E. Finley Papers.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of David E. Finley 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, David E. Finley Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1890, Sept. 13</td>
<td>Born, York, S.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>A.B., University of South Carolina. Columbia, S.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>LL.B., George Washington University Law School, Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917-1918</td>
<td>Served in United States Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-1922</td>
<td>Assistant counsel, War Finance Corp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-1927</td>
<td>Member, War Loan Staff, United States Treasury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927-1932</td>
<td>Special assistant to Secretary of the Treasury Andrew W. Mellon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Married Margaret Morton Eustis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932-1933</td>
<td>Honorary counselor for the American embassy in England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933-1937</td>
<td>Assisted Andrew W. Mellon in formulating plans for the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-1956</td>
<td>Director, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-1962</td>
<td>Chairman, National Trust for Historic Preservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-1963</td>
<td>Chairman, United States Commission of Fine Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977, Feb. 1</td>
<td>Died, Washington, D.C.</td>
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</table>

Scope and Content Note

The papers of David Edward Finley (1890-1977) span the years 1921-1977 and consist of general correspondence, subject material, writings, and miscellaneous papers. The collection is organized into four series: Correspondence; Subject File; Speech, Article, and Book File; and Miscellany.

Although there is a small group of Finley's personal correspondence for the years 1928-1972, which includes letters exchanged with Chester Dale, Paul Mellon, and Richard King Mellon, the bulk of his correspondence is contained in
subject files that encompass his career with the United States Treasury Department (1922-1932), the National Gallery of Art (1938-1956), and his activities with numerous artistic and cultural organizations.

It might be noted here that a figure, other than Finley, also pervades these papers, namely, the American financier Andrew W. Mellon. In 1922 Finley joined the War Loan staff of the United States Treasury Department where he soon came to the attention of Secretary of the Treasury Mellon. He served as Mellon's special assistant at the Treasury Department from 1927 until 1932, accompanied him to England when Mellon was named ambassador to that country, and from 1934 until Mellon's death in 1937, Finley assisted in the acquisition of art works for Mellon's collection.

One of the two most notable subject files contains papers relating to the United States Treasury for the period when Finley served as Secretary Mellon's special assistant. The treasury papers are made up mainly of letters sent and received by Andrew W. Mellon; however, the bulk of Mellon's replies were written by Finley for Mellon's signature. Much of the correspondence reflects Mellon's views on tax reduction and government debts resulting from World War I. There are also papers relating to the controversy between Mellon and Senator James Couzens over the secretary's tax reduction plans. The file also contains speeches and articles by Mellon.

The second major subject file contains papers relating to the National Gallery of Art. Finley was associated with the national gallery from its inception, and the collection depicts in detail his involvement with plans for the construction of the building, the installation of Mellon's art collection, and the acquisition of other collections, such as those of Chester Dale, Samuel H. Kress, and Joseph E. Widener. There are papers concerning the design and lighting of the various galleries and the myriad details involved in the day-to-day operation of the gallery. Other papers relate to activities of the gallery during World War II, such as the distribution of art reproductions to armed services hospitals and special programs and dinners for servicemen at the gallery. Of particular interest in the correspondence are letters to Finley from John Walker, who succeeded Finley as director of the national gallery. The letters were written from England and Europe over the years 1946-1947 when Walker was involved in consultations about the national gallery's participation in the art program of Unesco and the acquisition of European paintings for the gallery. Among the prominent correspondents in these papers are Huntington Cairns, Royal Cortissoz, Chester Dale, Samuel H. Kress, Richard King Mellon, Duncan Phillips, Lessing J. Rosenwald, Harlan Fiske Stone, and Francis Henry Taylor.

Another outstanding subject file is that of the Commission of Fine Arts. Finley was appointed to the commission by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1943. The papers relate to the architectural development of the city of Washington, D.C., to the selection of furniture and objects of art for the White House, and to various fine arts projects with which the federal government was concerned. Correspondents within this group include George Biddle, Clement E. Conger, Henry Francis Du Pont, James Earle Fraser, Walker Hancock, Herbert Hoover, Lady Kirkland Bird Johnson, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, President John F. Kennedy, Lincoln Kirstein, W. S. Lewis, Paul Manship, Eleanor Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, and Andrew Wyeth.

Included in the collection are papers pertaining to the People-to-People Program, a program to improve international relations through personal contacts by independent private groups and institutions. Finley was chairman of the fine arts committee, and his papers concern the distribution of color slides, photographs, and other color reproductions of American works of art to foreign countries. The committee also initiated a program for the donation of American paintings, sculpture, and prints to American embassies. Among Finley's correspondents are Leonard Carmichael, Lessing J. Rosenwald, and John Walker.

Papers pertaining to the National Portrait Gallery include correspondence with Senator Theodore Francis Green regarding legislation to establish and maintain the gallery. Other files concern the development of rules for the selection of portraits for the permanent collection. In addition to Green, correspondents include Leonard Carmichael, W. S. Lewis, Charles Nagel, and Sidney Dillon Ripley.

There is an extensive file for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, an organization chartered by Congress in 1949 to preserve historic American sites, buildings, objects, and antiquities of national significance. The papers show Finley's role in the formation of the trust and his direction of the organization as its first chairman. In addition to correspondence for the years 1946-1976, there are papers relating to the board of trustees and various committees, as well as files for individual historic properties such as the Cooper Union, Decatur House, and the Wayside Inn, Sudbury, Massachusetts. Correspondents include Marie Oge Beale, James Biddle, Helen Claire Duprey Bullock, Lewis W. Douglas, Edgar William Garbisch, and Gordon Gray.
Finley's papers also include a file of his speeches and articles and his book, *History of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1947-1963*.

A small group of miscellaneous papers contains bills and receipts, biographical material, family papers, scrapbooks, and printed matter.

**Arrangement of the Papers**

This collection is arranged in four series:

- Correspondence, 1928-1972
- Subject File, 1921-1977
- Speech, Article, and Book File, 1925-1974
- Miscellany, 1929-1969
## Description of Series

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<th>Container</th>
<th>Series</th>
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<td>BOX 1</td>
<td><strong>Correspondence, 1928-1972</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letters sent and received.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Arranged chronologically.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 1-83</td>
<td><strong>Subject File, 1921-1977</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correspondence, financial statements, minutes of meetings, and press releases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arranged alphabetically by subject.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 84-87</td>
<td><strong>Speech, Article, and Book File, 1925-1974</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Handwritten and typewritten drafts and printed copies of speeches, articles, and a book.</td>
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<td>Arranged by type of material.</td>
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<td>BOX 87-92</td>
<td><strong>Miscellany, 1929-1969</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bills and receipts, biographical papers, family papers, printed matter, and scrapbooks.</td>
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## Container List

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</table>
| BOX 1     | **Correspondence, 1928-1972**  
Letters sent and received.  
Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 1     | 1928-1972, undated  
(7 folders) |
| BOX 1-83  | **Subject File, 1921-1977**  
Correspondence, financial statements, minutes of meetings, and press releases.  
Arranged alphabetically by subject. |
| BOX 2     | Accokeek Foundation  
1957-1965  
(3 folders) |
| BOX 2     | American Association of Museums  
1945-1954  
(4 folders) |
| BOX 3     | 1955-1967  
(4 folders)  
Related papers  
Printed matter  
American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in Europe  
Correspondence, 1943-1945, 1948 |
| BOX 4     | Related papers, 1943-1946, undated  
(2 folders)  
American Committee for the Restoration of Italian Monuments  
American Institute of France  
American Museum of Immigration  
Association of Art Museum Directors  
Correspondence, 1947-1964  
Related papers  
Blair House, Washington, D.C.  
Ceccato Study Club  
(2 folders) |
| BOX 5     | Commission of Fine Arts  
Correspondence  
1942-1953  
(7 folders) |
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| BOX 6     | 1954-1962  
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| BOX 7     | 1963-1976  
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           | Anton Refregier murals  
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| BOX 8     | May-Dec.  
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           | (6 folders) |
| BOX 9     | Related papers |
|           | Committee on National Capital Museums |
|           | Federal Advisory Commission on the Arts |
|           | History and Technology Building, Smithsonian Institution |
|           | Meeting announcements |
|           | Minutes of meetings, 1962-1963 |
|           | "Old Georgetown," Washington, D.C. |
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|           | Postage stamp designs |
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| BOX 10    | 1961-1963 |
|           | Shipstead-Luce Act |
|           | Theodore Roosevelt Island Bridge, Washington, D.C.  
           | (2 folders) |
|           | War Art Museum  
           | (3 folders) |
| BOX 11    | (1 folder) |
|           | War memorials |
|           | White House furnishings and gifts |
|           | 1941-1950  
           | (4 folders) |
| BOX 12    | 1951-1962  
           | (2 folders) |
|           | Miscellany |
|           | Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. |
|           | Correspondence |
|           | 1946-1964  
           | (2 folders) |
| BOX 13    | 1965-1972  
<pre><code>       | (5 folders) |
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| BOX 14    | 1961-1967  
           | 1968-1975  
           | Fogg Art Museum, Boston, Mass.  
           | George T. Hunter Gallery of Art, Chattanooga, Tenn.  
           | Hampton National Historic Site, Towson, Md.  
           | Correspondence, 1945-1956  
           | (2 folders)  
           | Related papers  
           | International Council of Museums  
           | Correspondence  
           | 1946-1949  
           | (2 folders) |
| BOX 15    | 1950-1965  
           | (2 folders)  
           | Related papers  
           | Printed matter  
           | National Celebration Commission  
           | Correspondence  
           | 1954-1955  
           | (2 folders) |
| BOX 16    | 1956-1959  
           | Related papers  
           | Printed matter  
           | John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C.  
           | Mellon, Andrew W.  
           | Correspondence  
           | 1921-1930  
           | (3 folders) |
| BOX 17    | 1931-1937  
           | (2 folders)  
           | Related papers  
           | Commemorative postage stamps  
           | Correspondence, 1955, Feb.-1956, Jan.  
           | (2 folders)  
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           | Memorial fountain  
           | Correspondence  
           | 1947-1950 |
| BOX 18    | 1951-1952, June  
           | (2 folders)  
           | Authorization  
           | Blueprints  
           | Dedication  
           | (3 folders)  
           | National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C.  
<pre><code>       | Correspondence |
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<td>National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.</td>
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<td>1941</td>
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<td>Jan.-June</td>
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<td>BOX 20</td>
<td>July-Dec.</td>
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<td>1942</td>
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<td>BOX 21</td>
<td>June-Dec.</td>
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<td>1944-1952</td>
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<td>BOX 22</td>
<td>1953-1976</td>
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<td>National Gallery of Fine Art, Washington, D.C.</td>
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<td>BOX 23</td>
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<td>Argentine exhibition, 1956</td>
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<td>1938-1942</td>
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<td>BOX 24</td>
<td>1943-1956</td>
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<td>Resolutions</td>
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<td>BOX 25</td>
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<td>Chester Dale Collection</td>
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<td>Correspondence, 1940, June-1944, Aug.</td>
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<td>Chester Dale luncheon, 31 Mar. 1956</td>
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<td>Clapp resolution concerning German art works</td>
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<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Correspondence&lt;br&gt;1940-1946&lt;br&gt;(2 folders)&lt;br&gt;1947-1956&lt;br&gt;Minutes of meetings&lt;br&gt;Policies&lt;br&gt;Building&lt;br&gt;Correspondence, 1939-1943&lt;br&gt;Minutes of meetings&lt;br&gt;Related papers&lt;br&gt;Executive&lt;br&gt;Special&lt;br&gt;Concerts</td>
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</table>
| BOX 27    | Construction and maintenance<br>Correspondence<br>1937, Sept. 1937-1939<br>(5 folders)<br>1940<br>Jan.-Aug.<br>(4 folders)<br>BOX 28    | Sept.-Dec.<br>(2 folders)<br>1941<br>(2 folders)<br>1942-1945, 1955, 1969<br>Related papers<br>(2 folders)<br>BOX 29    | Decoration of American embassies, 1947-1967<br>(4 folders)<br>Entertainment budget, 1945-1956<br>Fifteenth anniversary celebration<br>(3 folders)<br>BOX 30    | Gallery opening, 1941<br>Correspondence<br>(6 folders)<br>Speeches<br>Related papers<br>BOX 31    | Joseph E. Widener Collection<br>Correspondence, 1939-1953<br>(2 folders)<br>Related papers<br>(2 folders)<br>Press releases<br>1939, Apr.-1942, Feb.<br>(2 folders)<br>BOX 32    | 1942, Mar.-1952, Nov.<br>(2 folders)
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<th>Container</th>
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</table>
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            | Correspondence  
            | 1938, Feb.-1942, July  
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| BOX 34    | 1943, Jan.-1960, Oct.  
            | Press releases  
            | Related papers  
            | (3 folders)  
            | Suppers for servicemen  
| BOX 35    | Tenth anniversary celebration, 1951  
            | Correspondence, Jan.-Mar.  
            | Belin-Dale dinner, 17 Mar.  
            | Finley dinner, 17 Mar.  
            | Garrett dinner, 17 Mar.  
            | Miscellany  
            | (2 folders)  
| BOX 36    | National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.  
            | Correspondence  
            | 1938-1966  
            | (3 folders)  
| BOX 37    | 1967-1974  
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| BOX 38    | 1975-1977  
| BOX 39    | Minutes of the National Portrait Gallery Commission  
            | Related papers  
            | (3 folders)  
| BOX 40    | National Trust for Historic Preservation  
            | Correspondence  
            | 1946-1950  
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| BOX 41    | 1951-1957  
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| BOX 42    | 1958-1963  
            | (7 folders)  
            | (7 folders)  
| BOX 44    | 1975, Oct.-1976, undated  
            | (2 folders)  
| BOX 45    | Administrator and director, reports of  
            | Annual meetings  
            | 1953-1959  
            | (5 folders)  
| BOX 46    | 1960-1976  
            | (8 folders)  
<p>|</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Container</th>
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</tr>
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</table>
| BOX 43    | Annual reports, 1954-1973  
(4 folders)  
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Correspondence  
1949-1972  
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1973-1976  
Minutes of meetings, 1950-1975  
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<td>Smithsonian Art Commission</td>
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<td>Adams, Charles Francis (1866-1954)</td>
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<td>Agricultural Credits Act, 1923</td>
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<td>Alien property claims</td>
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<td>Anderson, Chandler P.</td>
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<td>Annual report, 1931</td>
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<td>Armstrong, Hamilton Fish</td>
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<td>Aspinall, Wayne</td>
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<td>Atherton, Ray</td>
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<td>Attorneys and agents practicing before the United States Treasury</td>
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<td>&quot;Ba&quot; miscellaneous</td>
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<td>Bacon, Virginia</td>
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<td>Bailey, Josiah W.</td>
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<td>Baker, Bryant</td>
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"Advantages of a Sound Tax Policy"
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"American Art for American Embassies and Consulates"

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"Art in America"

"The Case for a Permanent Art Collection"

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"National Gallery of Art"

"National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Becomes a Chief Cultural Center of United States"

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*Verrocchio's Bust of Lorenzo de Medici*

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