

Oscar S. Straus Papers

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Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff
Revised by Melinda K. Friend

Collection Summary

Title: Oscar S. Straus Papers

Span Dates: 1856-1955

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1856-1923)

ID No.: MSS41749

Creator: Straus, Oscar S. (Oscar Solomon), 1850-1926

Extent: 37,000 items ; 50 containers plus 1 oversize ; 21 linear feet ; 1 microfilm reel

Language: Collection material in English

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

Summary: Attorney, businessman, public official, diplomat, United States secretary of commerce and labor, and author. Correspondence, diaries, speeches, writings, legal records, pamphlets, clippings, scrapbooks, photographs, memorabilia, and other papers relating chiefly to Straus's service as minister and later ambassador to the Ottoman Empire (Turkey), United States secretary of commerce and labor, and member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, Hague, Netherlands.

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

Bacon, Robert, 1860-1919--Correspondence.
Barrett, John, 1866-1938--Correspondence.
Bayard, Thomas F. (Thomas Francis), 1828-1898--Correspondence.
Butler, Nicholas Murray, 1862-1947--Correspondence.
Carnegie, Andrew, 1835-1919--Correspondence.
Cleveland, Grover, 1837-1908--Correspondence.
Coolidge, Calvin, 1872-1933--Correspondence.
Easley, Ralph M. (Ralph Montgomery), 1858- --Correspondence.
Garfield, James Rudolph, 1865-1950--Correspondence.
Griscom, Lloyd Carpenter, 1872-1959--Correspondence.
Harding, Warren G. (Warren Gamaliel), 1865-1923--Correspondence.
Harrison, Benjamin, 1833-1901--Correspondence.
Hay, John, 1838-1905--Correspondence.
Kohns, Lee, 1864-1927--Correspondence.
Lansing, Robert, 1864-1928--Correspondence.
Lavanburg, Louis.
Loeb, William, 1866-1937--Correspondence.
McKinley, William, 1843-1901--Correspondence.
Ochs, Adolph S. (Adolph Simon), 1858-1935--Correspondence.
Peabody, George Foster, 1852-1938--Correspondence.
Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919--Correspondence.
Root, Elihu, 1845-1937--Correspondence.
Straus, Isidor, 1845-1912--Correspondence.
Straus, Isidor, 1845-1912.
Straus, Nathan, 1848-1931--Correspondence.
Straus, Oscar S. (Oscar Solomon), 1850-1926.
Strauss family.
Taft, William H. (William Howard), 1857-1930--Correspondence.
Wilson, Woodrow, 1856-1924--Correspondence.

Organizations

Industrial Conference (1919-1920 : Washington, D.C.)
League to Enforce Peace (U.S.)
National Civic Federation.

New York (State). Public Service Commission.
Oscar S. Straus Memorial Association. Oscar S. Straus Memorial Association records. 1927-1954.
Permanent Court of Arbitration.
United States. Department of Commerce and Labor.

Subjects

Arbitration (International law)
Diplomatic and consular service, American--Turkey.
Freedom of religion--Turkey.
Industrial relations--United States.
Labor policy--United States.
Wages--Railroads--United States.
World War, 1914-1918.

Places

Egypt--Description and travel.
Romania.
Russia.
Turkey--Foreign relations--United States.
Turkey--History--Ottoman Empire, 1288-1918.
United States--Economic policy.
United States--Foreign relations--Turkey.

Occupations

Authors.
Businessmen.
Cabinet officers.
Diplomats.
Lawyers.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Oscar S. Straus, attorney, businessman, public official, diplomat, United States secretary of commerce and labor, and author, were given to the Library of Congress by the Oscar S. Straus Memorial Association, Inc., in 1945-1956.

Processing History

The Oscar S. Straus Papers were processed circa 1950 and expanded circa 1954-1956. The finding aid was revised in 2011.

Transfers

A pamphlet has been transferred to the Rare Book and Special Collections Division where it is identified as part of the Oscar S. Straus Papers.

Additional Guides

An alphabetically arranged index and a chronologically arranged calendar are available in the Manuscript Reading Room. A description of the Oscar S. Straus Papers appeared in the *Library of Congress Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions* 7, no.2 (February 1950): 3-6.

Copyright Status

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

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Oscar S. Straus 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.

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 number, Oscar S. Straus Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1850, Dec. 23	Born, Otterberg, Bavaria
1854	Came to America and lived in Talbotton, Ga.
1865	Moved to New York, N.Y.
1871	A.B., Columbia University, New York, N.Y.
1873	LL.D., Columbia University, New York, N.Y.
1873-1881	Practiced law, New York, N.Y.
1881-1906	Member of the firm L. Straus & Sons, importers of pottery and glassware
1882	Married Sarah Lavenburg (died 1945)
1885	Published <i>The Origin of Republican Form of Government in the United States of America</i> . New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons
1887-1889	Minister to Ottoman Empire (Turkey)
1894	Published <i>Roger Williams, the Pioneer of Religious Liberty</i> . New York: The Century Co.
1898-1899	Minister to Ottoman Empire (Turkey)
1902-1924	Appointed member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, Hague, Netherlands
1906-1909	United States secretary of commerce and labor; first Jew appointed to a cabinet position
1909-1910	Ambassador to Ottoman Empire (Turkey)
1912	Chairman, arbitration commission to decide wage dispute between eastern railways and their engineers
1913	Published <i>The American Spirit</i> . New York: The Century Co.

1915-1918	Chairman, New York Public Service Commission, First District
1919	Chairman, Paris Committee of the League to Enforce Peace
1919-1920	Member, President's Second Industrial Conference to establish a code of industrial relations
1922	Published autobiography <i>Under Four Administrations, from Cleveland to Taft; Reflections of Oscar S. Straus</i> . New York: Houghton Mifflin
1926, May 3	Died, New York, N.Y.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Oscar Solomon Straus (1850-1926) span the years circa 1856-1955, with the bulk of the material dating from 1856 to 1923. The collection chiefly relates to Straus's service as minister and later ambassador to the Ottoman Empire (Turkey), United States secretary of commerce and labor, and member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, Hague, Netherlands. When appointed by Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 as secretary of commerce and labor, Straus became the first Jew to hold a cabinet post. The papers are organized into the following series: [Correspondence](#), [Diaries and Notebooks](#), [Scrapbooks](#), [Miscellany](#), and [Addition](#). A select index of correspondence from Theodore Roosevelt and his secretaries appears at end of the container list.

The [Correspondence](#) includes general correspondence and letterbooks of Straus's outgoing letters. In the early correspondence are letters between Straus and his older brothers, Nathan and Isidor, with many of Isidor's letters written during Straus's first appointment as minister to the Ottoman Empire (Turkey). Other correspondents from Straus's career include Robert Bacon, John Barrett, Thomas F. Bayard, Nicholas Murray Butler, Andrew Carnegie, Grover Cleveland, Calvin Coolidge, Ralph M. Easley, James Rudolph Garfield, Lloyd Carpenter Griscom, Warren G. Harding, Benjamin Harrison, John Hay, Lee Kohns, Robert Lansing, William Loeb, William McKinley, Adolph S. Ochs, George Foster Peabody, Theodore Roosevelt, Elihu Root, William H. Taft, and Woodrow Wilson.

The [Diaries and Notebooks](#) series contains diaries covering Straus's career and miscellaneous notebooks. The diaries begin with Straus's first appointment as minister to the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) from 1887 to 1888, resume with his second appointment to that post from 1898 to 1900, then cover the remainder of his career beginning with his appointment as secretary of labor and commerce in 1906 through his appointment as a member of the President's Second Industrial Conference in 1919 and end in 1923. A discrete set of notes tucked inside the 1887-1888 diary is Straus's memorandum about a trip to Egypt in March-April 1888. Also included in the folder with the diary is a memorandum and letter recounting infringements on religious liberty in the empire probably in violation of the Berlin treaty of 1878. The miscellaneous notebooks include lecture notes and thoughts and quotations kept by Straus and two notebooks in shorthand kept by Straus's personal secretary, Theodore Linus Weed.

The [Scrapbooks](#), though arranged somewhat chronologically, are largely topical. Individual scrapbooks cover Straus's publications *The Origin of Republican Form of Government in the United States of America*; *Roger Williams, the Pioneer of Religious Liberty*; and *The American Spirit*. Other volumes include his involvement with the Ottoman Empire (Turkey); the Permanent Court of Arbitration; the National Civic Federation; his years in the cabinet; Romania and Russia; the death of his father-in-law Louis Lavenburg; World War I; and the death of Straus himself. Selected items have been microfilmed.

[Miscellany](#) contains manuscripts of Straus's publications and speeches, commemorative items, photographs, clippings and other printed matter, diplomas, and an autobiography of Isidor Straus published posthumously. Included also are the minutes of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a memorial address in memory of John Hay.

The [Addition](#) is comprised of the records of the Oscar S. Straus Memorial Association. Included is correspondence, congressional resolutions, minutes, clippings, blueprints, and mailing lists covering the public subscription campaign and the construction of a memorial to Straus in Washington, D.C., and a lecture series given under the aegis of the association entitled "Commentary on Pan American Problems" and presented by Ricardo J. Alfaro.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in five series:

- Correspondence, 1856-1931
- Diaries and Notebooks, 1871-1923
- Scrapbooks, 1885-1926
- Miscellany, 1868-1955
- Addition, 1927-1954

Description of Series

Container

Series

BOX 1-21

Correspondence, 1856-1931

Letters sent and received, including photocopies of correspondence from other parts of the collection, along with clippings and other printed matter, drafts of documents, essays, notes, photographs, and speeches.

Arranged under general correspondence and letterbooks and therein chronologically.

BOX 21-24

Diaries and Notebooks, 1871-1923

Handwritten and typed diaries, with correspondence, clippings, photographs, and other material laid or pasted in, and miscellaneous notebooks. Correspondence tipped into the volumes has been photocopied and the photocopies inserted chronologically in the Correspondence series.

Arranged by type of material and therein chronologically. *See [Select Index of Theodore Roosevelt Correspondence and Related Items](#)*

BOX 25-37

Scrapbooks, 1885-1926

Clippings, correspondence, photographs, calling cards, and printed matter. Correspondence tipped into the volumes has been photocopied and the photocopies inserted chronologically in the Correspondence series. *Selected items are available on Microfilm shelf no. 8,924.*

Arranged chronologically.

BOX 38-OV 43

Miscellany, 1868-1955

Speeches and writings, clippings, commemorative items, diplomas, memorials, minutes, photographs, printed matter, an autobiography of Isidor Straus, and other miscellaneous material.

Arranged by type of material.

BOX 44-51

Addition, 1927-1954

Correspondence, congressional resolutions, minutes, clippings, receipts, blueprints, and mailing lists relating to the Oscar S. Straus Memorial Association.

Arranged by type of material and therein chronologically.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-21	Correspondence, 1856-1931 Letters sent and received, including photocopies of correspondence from other parts of the collection, along with clippings and other printed matter, drafts of documents, essays, notes, photographs, and speeches. Arranged under general correspondence and letterbooks and therein chronologically.
BOX 1	General correspondence
BOX 1	1856-1888 (6 folders)
BOX 2	1889-1898 (6 folders)
BOX 3	1899, Jan.-1904, June (5 folders)
BOX 4	1904, July 6-1906, Nov. 15 (6 folders)
BOX 5	1906, Nov. 16-1907, Feb. 14 (6 folders)
BOX 6	1907
BOX 6	Feb. 15-May 16 (6 folders)
BOX 7	May 17-Oct. 15 (8 folders)
BOX 8	1907, Oct. 16-1908, Jan. 31 (7 folders)
BOX 9	1908
BOX 9	Feb. 1-May 15 (7 folders)
BOX 10	May 16-Oct. 31 (9 folders)
BOX 11	1908, Nov.-1909, Jan. (6 folders)
BOX 12	1909, Feb. 1-1912, Oct. 20 (9 folders)
BOX 13	1912, Oct. 21-1916, Dec. 27 (9 folders)
BOX 14	1917-1918 (9 folders)
BOX 15	1919-1925 (11 folders)
BOX 16	1926 (12 folders)
BOX 17	1928-1931
BOX 17	Undated

Correspondence, 1856-1931

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 17	Letterbooks
BOX 17	1873-1889 (2 vols.)
BOX 18	1889-1897 (2 vols.)
BOX 19	1898-1903 (3 vols.)
BOX 20	1906-1908 (3 vols.)
BOX 21	1908-1909 (3 vols.)
BOX 21-24	Diaries and Notebooks, 1871-1923 Handwritten and typed diaries, with correspondence, clippings, photographs, and other material laid or pasted in, and miscellaneous notebooks. Correspondence tipped into the volumes has been photocopied and the photocopies inserted chronologically in the Correspondence series. Arranged by type of material and therein chronologically. <i>See <u>Select Index of Theodore Roosevelt Correspondence and Related Items</u></i>
BOX 21	Notebooks
BOX 21	1871, college lecture notes on metaphysics
BOX 21	1872, thoughts and quotations
BOX 21	1908, June 21, shorthand notes
BOX 21	Undated, stenographer's notebook of Theodore Linus Weed labeled "Weed's Notes, No. 2, Diary"
BOX 22	Diaries
BOX 22	1887-1888, 1898-1900, 1906-1907 (5 folders)
BOX 23	1908-1914 (6 folders)
BOX 24	1914-1923 (5 folders)
BOX 25-37	Scrapbooks, 1885-1926 Clippings, correspondence, photographs, calling cards, and printed matter. Correspondence tipped into the volumes has been photocopied and the photocopies inserted chronologically in the Correspondence series. <i>Selected items are available on Microfilm shelf no. 8,924.</i> Arranged chronologically.
BOX 25	1885-1886
BOX 25	1887-1889
BOX 26	1887-1889
BOX 26	1894-1897
BOX 26	1898-1900
BOX 27	1898-1899
BOX 27	1901-1902
BOX 27	1901-1905
BOX 28	1901

Scrapbooks, 1885-1926

Container

Contents

BOX 28	1901-1904
BOX 29	1902-1905
BOX 30	1904
BOX 30	1906
BOX 31	1909
BOX 32	1907-1908
BOX 32	1908
BOX 33	1908
BOX 34	1908
BOX 35	1908
BOX 35	1909
BOX 36	1913
BOX 36	1918
BOX 36	1926
BOX 38-OV 43	Miscellany, 1868-1955 Speeches and writings, clippings, commemorative items, diplomas, memorials, minutes, photographs, printed matter, an autobiography of Isidor Straus, and other miscellaneous material. Arranged by type of material.
BOX 38	Commemorative items from dinner given by citizens of New York for Straus, 1909
BOX 38	Memorials on death of Straus, 1926 (6 vols.)
BOX 39	Minutes of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1922-1925 (2 vols.)
BOX 39	Notes, 1922, undated
BOX 39	Speeches and writings by Straus
BOX 39	"The Origin of Republican Form of Government in the United States and the Hebrew Commonwealth," speech, 1884
BOX 39	<i>The Origin of Republican Form of Government in the United States of America</i> , draft, circa 1885 (2 folders)
BOX 39	<i>Roger Williams, the Pioneer of Religious Liberty</i> , draft, circa 1894 (3 folders)
BOX 40	<i>The United States and Russia: Their Historical Relations</i> , 1905
BOX 40	"Address of Hon. Oscar S. Straus, Secretary of Commerce and Labor, at the Banquet to General Kuroki," 1907
BOX 40	<i>Under Four Administrations, from Cleveland to Taft; Reflections of Oscar S. Straus</i> , draft, circa 1922 (2 folders)
BOX 40	<i>Autobiography of Isidor Straus</i> , 1955
BOX 40	Printed matter and clippings
BOX 40	1868-1871, 1889-1920 (4 folders)
BOX 41	1921-1925, undated (2 folders)

Miscellany, 1868-1955

Container

Contents

BOX 41	Photographs, 1888-1889, 1897, 1909, 1915-1923, 1943, undated (2 folders)
BOX 41	Unsorted newspaper clippings, circa 1898-circa 1912 (2 folders)
BOX 42	Commemorative book on dedication of Oscar S. Straus Memorial, Washington, D.C., 1947
BOX OV 43	Diplomas, circa 1871-circa 1873
BOX OV 43	Convocation program, Columbia University, New York, N.Y., 1904
BOX OV 43	Photograph of Nathan, Oscar, and Isidor Straus, undated
BOX OV 43	Printed memorial address from the Jews of America and Great Britain to Clara Hay, in memory of her deceased husband, John Hay, 1905
BOX 44-51	Addition, 1927-1954 Correspondence, congressional resolutions, minutes, clippings, receipts, blueprints, and mailing lists relating to the Oscar S. Straus Memorial Association. Arranged by type of material and therein chronologically.
BOX 44	Oscar S. Straus Memorial Association
BOX 44	Correspondence and other papers
BOX 44	1927-1930 (17 folders)
BOX 45	1931-1935 (9 folders)
BOX 46	1936-1938 (12 folders)
BOX 47	1939-1940 (8 folders)
BOX 48	1941-1943 (7 folders)
BOX 49	1944-1946 (8 folders)
BOX 49	1947
BOX 49	Jan.-Sept. (3 folders)
BOX 50	Oct.-Dec. (4 folders)
BOX 50	1948-1954 (6 folders)
BOX 51	Agreement, 1940
BOX 51	Blueprints, circa 1940-circa 1941
BOX 51	Clippings, 1929-1933
BOX 51	Mailing lists, undated

Select Index of Theodore Roosevelt Correspondence and Related Items

Theodore Roosevelt

Item	Date
Typewritten letter from Roosevelt re transfer of George Baldwin of Maryland from confidential clerk to first auditor, Civil Service	June 22, 1894
Roosevelt re Miller and trade union	Oct. 1, 1903
Roosevelt congratulating Straus (new Republic of Panama)	Nov. 12, 1903
Roosevelt re passport question	Aug. 5, 1904
Roosevelt re Jews, Catholics, and Protestants	Oct. 15, 1904
Roosevelt invitation to Straus to talk things over	Nov. 11, 1904
Roosevelt with handwritten postscript re ambassador to Russia appointment	Dec. 16, 1904
Invitation to lunch	Jan. 7, 1905
Roosevelt re Russia-Japan conference	June 15, 1905
Roosevelt re Russian Jew question	Aug. 16, 1905
Roosevelt re Jewish Russia	Dec. 14, 1905
Roosevelt re cabinet appointment of Straus	Jan. 13, 1906
Roosevelt with handwritten notations re Germany and Morocco matter	Feb. 27, 1906
Handwritten note of Roosevelt re Kent of Virginia	No date
Roosevelt re Russian massacres of Jews	Apr. 10, 1906
Roosevelt re Russian massacres of Jews	Apr. 13, 1906
Roosevelt acknowledging telegram of Straus	Sept. 2, 1906
Roosevelt complimenting Straus article about attack upon Jews	Sept. 6, 1906
Roosevelt re Hughes campaign and Jewish vote (2 letters)	Oct. 9-13, 1906
Roosevelt re appointment	Oct. 26, 1906
Roosevelt re Miss Rosa Mordecai	Oct. 29, 1906
Letter dictated by Roosevelt signed by William Loeb, Jr., re Mordecai Labor	Oct. 31, 1906
Roosevelt re appointment	Dec. 6, 1906
Melville Fuller, Chief Justice of U.S., re Nobel Prize	Jan. 4, 1907
Roosevelt re shipping matters to Straus as secretary of commerce and labor	Jan. 11, 1907
Roosevelt re labor decision in South Carolina	Jan. 18, 1907
Roosevelt re Bureau of Labor	Feb. 20, 1907
Roosevelt re Sunday work in departments	Mar. 25, 1908
Elihu Root re Roosevelt's direction appointing Straus to Hague Convention	Apr. 30, 1908
Roosevelt re estimate of men of Roosevelt's administration	May 23, 1908
Roosevelt re Hughes renomination	Aug. 29, 1908
Roosevelt re position to Keefe	Sept. 15, 1908
Roosevelt to secretary of commerce and labor asking for information	Dec. 22, 1908
Roosevelt with notes re absorption of Tennessee Coal and Iron Company	Jan. 29, 1909
Roosevelt from Outlook office re census matters	June 30, 1911
Roosevelt thanking Straus for fruit	Oct. 19, 1911
Roosevelt re Hearst papers and Woodrow Wilson nomination	June 7, 1912
Roosevelt re gubernatorial campaign	Sept. 8, 1912
Telegram of Roosevelt re Progressive nomination from Tennessee	Sept. 25, 1912
Roosevelt re election in Michigan of Progressive	Feb. 24, 1913
Roosevelt general information, also comments re Straus's candidacy for governor	July 11, 1918

Secretaries to Theodore Roosevelt

Item	Date
William Loeb, Jr., re Roosevelt's thanks for admirable speech of Straus	Oct. 23, 1903
William Loeb, Jr., re Roosevelt's invitation to lunch	Oct. 31, 1903

Item	Date
William Loeb, Jr., re International Arbitration Congress	Jan. 14, 1904
William Loeb, Jr., re acknowledging letter, etc.	Aug. 13, 1904
William Loeb, Jr., re minister to Roumania	Nov. 19, 1904
William Loeb, Jr., re invitation of Roosevelt to luncheon	Mar. 7, 1905
William Loeb, Jr., re immigration bill	June 5, 1906
William Loeb, Jr., re appointment to Hague Tribunal	Apr. 29, 1908
Letter of Elihu Root, informing Straus of Roosevelt's pleasure of reappointment to Hague Tribunal	Apr. 29, 1908
Alvey A. Adee, re death of former president Grover Cleveland	June 24, 1908
William Loeb, Jr., re invitation to dinner	Nov. 4, 1908
Two letters signed by Edith Kermit Roosevelt	