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James Truslow Adams Papers, 1918-1949

MS# 0008

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SUMMARY INFORMATION

Creator

James Truslow Adams

Title and dates

James Truslow Adams Papers, 1918-1949

Abstract

The collection is composed of the correspondence files of the James Truslow Adams; also included are a carbon copy of Adams' *American Tragedy*; carbon and typescript of Adams' *American Family*. Among his miscellaneous family documents is an extract from the Hearings before un-American Activities Committee, February 1948.

Size

15 linear ft. (24 boxes; 1 oversize folder; 1 roll)

Call number

MS# 0008

Location

Columbia University
Butler Library, 6th Floor
Rare Book and Manuscript Library

535 West 114th Street
New York, NY 10027

Language(s) of material

In English.

Biographical Note



James Truslow Adams was successful businessman who became a celebrated historian, writing chiefly about the history of early New England.

In 1912, having worked for twelve years as a businessman in a New York brokerage house, Adams moved to Bridgehampton, L.I., and began writing. His first books--*Memorials of Old Bridgehampton* (1916) and *History of the Town of Southampton* (1918)--established him as a credible historian. During World War I he was appointed the Paris Peace Conference as part of the American delegation.

After the war Adams began researching and writing on the history of New England, which resulted in his epic three-volume series comprising *The Founding of New England*, which was published in 1921, and won the Pulitzer Prize in 1922; *Revolutionary New England, 1691-1776*, which was published in 1923 and became a bestseller; and *New England in the Republic, 1776-1850*, which was published in 1926.

Adams wrote biographical sketches of famous historians for the *Dictionary of American Biography*. In 1929 Adams moved to London and began working for magazines. While in London he published two collections of essays: *Our Business Civilization: Some Aspects of American Culture* and *The Tempo of Modern Life*, as well as his history of the Adams family, *The Adams Family*, was a financial success.

In his *The Epic of America*, published in 1933, Adams attempted to address the historic development and philosophic vision of America. It was in this book that Adams coined the term "The American Dream" which he defined as, "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position."

In due course, Adams gave up writing in favor of editing, working on such titles as the *Dictionary of American History*, the *Atlas of American History*, and the *Album of American History*.

In 1968, Allan Nevins published his biography of Adams: *James Truslow Adams: Historian of the American Dream* [see image above].

Writings by James Truslow Adams:

- *Some Notes on the Currency Problem*, Lindley (New York City), 1908.
- *Speculation and the Reform of the New York Stock Exchange*, privately printed (Summit, NJ), 1913.
- *Memorials of Old Bridgehampton*, privately printed (Bridgehampton, NY), 1916.
- *History of the Town of Southampton*, East of Canoe Place, Hampton Press (Bridgehampton, NY), 1918.
- *The Founding of New England*, Atlantic Monthly Press (Boston), 1921.
- *Revolutionary New England, 1691-1776*, Atlantic Monthly Press, 1923.
- *New England in the Republic, 1776-1850*, Little, Brown (Boston), 1926.
- *Provincial Society, 1690-1763*, Macmillan (New York City), 1927.
- (Editor) *Hamiltonian Principles*, Little, Brown, 1928.
- (Editor) *Jeffersonian Principles*, Little, Brown, 1928.
- *Our Business Civilization: Some Aspects of American Culture*, A. & C. Boni (New York City), 1929, published as *A Searchlight on America*, Routledge (London), 1930.
- *The Adams Family*, Little, Brown, 1930.
- *The Epic of America*, Little, Brown, 1931.
- *The Tempo of Modern Life*, A. & C. Boni (New York City), 1931.
- (With Henry S. Graves and Edward A. Filene) *New England's Prospect*, American Geographic Society (New York City), 1933.
- *The March of Democracy, volumes 1 and 2*, Scribner (New York City), 1932-33, published as *History of the American People*, Routledge, 1933.
- *Henry Adams*, A. & C. Boni, 1933.
- *America's Tragedy*, Scribner (London), 1934.
- (With Charles Garrett Vannest) *The Record of America*, Scribner, 1935.
- *The Living Jefferson*, Scribner, 1936.
- *Building the British Empire, to the End of the First Empire*, Scribner, 1938.
- *Empire on the Seven Seas: The British Empire, 1784-1939*, Scribner, 1940.
- (Editor) *Dictionary of American History*, six volumes, Scribner, 1940.
- *An American Looks at the British Empire*, Farrar & Rinehart (New York City), 1940, published as *America Faces the War and an American Looks at the British Empire (America Faces the War, No. 2)*, Oxford University Press (London), 1941.
- (Reviser) *James Montgomery Beck, the Constitution of the United States*, Doubleday, Doran (Garden City, NY), 1941.
- *The American: The Making of a New Man*, Scribner, 1943.
- (Editor) *Atlas of American History*, Scribner, 1943.
- *Frontiers of American Culture: A Study of Adult Education in a Democracy*, Scribner, 1944.

- (Editor) *Album of American History*, volumes 1-4, Scribner, 1944-1948.
- *Big Business in a Democracy*, Scribner, 1945.

Description

The collection is composed of the correspondence files of the James Truslow Adams. The majority of the letters were written to Adams by various contemporary historians, educators, public figures, business associates, friends and family. The material ranges in date from 1918-1949. The letters are concerned with the following: Adams' literary activities and the publication of his writings; contemporary politics; personal and business affairs; requests and solicitations from individuals and groups for support, etc.; scholarly and academic activities. While very few original letters sent by Adams are present, there exist margin notes in his own hand on incoming letters indicating the nature of his reply. Of special note are six volumes of mounted letters and clippings relating to President Roosevelt's plan to reorganize the United States Supreme Court. Adams was an opponent of the plan.

Included are a series of three hundred letters (photostat, carbon, typescript, etc.) written by Adams to friends and family during his service in World War I; also included are a carbon copy of Adams' *American Tragedy*; carbon and typescript of Adams' *American Family*. Among his miscellaneous family documents is an extract from the Hearings before un-American Activities Committee, February 1948. 1,235 letters between himself and his publisher, Little Brown & Co., pertaining mainly to the publication of Adams' historical writings. Of special interest are the letters of Mr. Adams dated Feb. 5, 1932, Jan. 20, 1932, Nov. 4, 1931, Oct. 21, 1931, Oct. 11, 1931, Sept. 8, 1931, Dec. 10, 1929, May 11, 1929, Sept. 4, 1928, May 28, 1928, Oct. 2, 1927, July 13, 1927, May 12, 1926, and May 8, 1927 (in the 1926 file), which contain Mr. Adams' comments on British political affairs and the economic crisis. Of interest is a letter dated June 10, 1923 on the teaching of history in secondary schools and the texts used. There is also one volume *Memorials of Old Bridgehampton* (1916), privately printed at Bridgehampton, Long Island.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged in seven series.

[Series I: Cataloged Correspondence](#)

[Series II: Arranged Correspondence](#)

[Series III: Manuscripts](#)

[Series IV: Ephemera and Photographs](#)

[Series V: Scrapbooks and Newspapers](#)

[Series VI: Oversized Scrapbooks](#)

[Series VII: Card File](#)

ACCESS AND USE

Access

The unpublished manuscript an *An American Family* is restricted to the use of J.T. Adams family. Permission of heirs of J.T. Adams is required.

This collection is located on-site.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information

Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. Permission to publish material from the collection must be requested from the Curator of Manuscripts, Rare Book and Manuscript Library (RBML). The RBML approves permission to publish that which it physically owns; the responsibility to secure copyright permission rests with the patron.

ACQUISITION AND APPRAISAL

Provenance and Acquisition

Gift of Mrs. J.T. Adams, 1953
Gift of Yale University Libraries, 1980
Gift of the estate of J.T. Adams, 1991

Accrual of Records

No additions are expected.

PROCESSING AND OTHER INFORMATION

Processing Information

This collection was processed by RBML staff. Finding aid revised by Michael Stone in March 2000.

Descriptive Rules Used

Finding aid adheres to that prescribed by *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*

Encoding

Finding aid written in English.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); James Truslow Adams Papers; Box and Folder; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.

Subject Headings

These papers have been indexed in the Columbia University Library online catalog using the following terms. Those seeking related materials should search under these terms.

Adams, James Truslow
Historians
Judges--Selection and appointment--United States--History--20th century

Little, Brown and Company

Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945

United States.--Congress.--House.--Committee on Un-American Activities.

United States. Supreme Court--History--20th century

World War, 1914-1918--Personal narratives, American

Series I: Cataloged Correspondence

- Box 1** Adams, Henry
 Adams, James Truslow
- Box 2** Amory, Cleveland
 Arnall, Ellis
 Arms, John Taylor
 Aswell, Edward C.
 Baldwin, Raymond E.
 Barr, Stringfellow
 Becker, Carl
 Benet, Steven Vincent
 Boni, Albert
 Breasted, James Henry
 Brooks, Van Wyck
 Buck, Pearl
 Burlingham, Charles C.
 Butler, Nicholas Murray
 Callender, Harold
 Canby, Henry Seidel
 Coker, Francis W.
 Commager, Henry Steele
 Cortissoz, Royal
 Coudert, Fredric Rene
 Cousins, Norman
 Cross, Wilbur L.
 Damrosch, Walter Johannes
 Darrow, Whitney
 Dashiell, Alfred S.
 Dewey, John
 Dewey, Thomas E.
 duPont, Eugene E.
 Erskine, John
 Fadiman, Clifton
 Finley, David
 Ford, Worthington C.
 Fox, Dixon Ryan
 Freeman, Douglas Southall
 Garland, Hamlin
 Gibson, Charles Dana
 Hagedorn, Herman
 Hamilton, Clayton
 Hampden, Walter
 Hazlitt, Henry
 Hirst, Francis W.

Hoover, Herbert
Hoover, J. Edgar
Howard, Sidney
Howe, M. A. DeWolfe
Howe, Mark Antony

Box 3

Howe, Will D.
Hull, Cordel
Johnson, Robert Underwood
Jusserland, Jean Jules
Keller, Helen
Kent, Henry Watson
Kingsly, Charles
LaFarge, Oliver
LaGuardia, Fiorello H.
Landon, Alf M.
Lamont, Thomas W.
Leach, Henry Goddard
Liddell Hart, Sir Basil Henry
Lippman, Walter
Lord, Edward
Loveman, Amy
McAfee, Helen
McIntyre, Alfred
MacLeish, Archibald
Manship, Paul
Merritt, Carol B.
Millikan, Robert Andrews
Moore, Charles
Morison, Samuel Eliot
Muirhead, J. F.
Murry, J. Middleton
Muzzey, David S.

Box 4

Nathan, Robert
Nevins, Allan
Nixon, Richard M.
Palmer, Paul
Pearson, Edmund
Perkins, Maxwell E.
Phelps, William Lyon
Pollock, Channing
Post, Emily (Mrs. Price)
Pringle, Henry Fowles
Putnam, Herbert
Roosevelt, Franklin Delano

Roosevelt, Theodore, Jr.
Scribner, Charles
Sedgwick, Ellery
Sinclair, Upton
Sloan, Alfred Pritchard, Jr.
Smuts, Jan Christian
Speicher, Eugene
Stout, Rex
Stowe, Lyman Beecher
Sullivan, Mark
Swope, Gerard
Tarkington, Booth
Thompson, Dorothy
Tinker, Chauncey Brewster
Train, Arthur
Untermeyer, Louis
Vanderbilt, Harold Stirling
Van Doren, Carl
Van Doren, Mark
van Loon, Hendrik Willem
Weeks, Edward
Wheelock, John Hall
White, William Allen
Young, Owen D.

Series II: Arranged Correspondence

Box 5	Letters A-B
Box 6	Letters C-E
Box 7	Letters F-J
Box 8	Letters K-O
Box 9	Letters P-S
Box 10	Letters T-Z and unidentified fragments
Box 11	Letters of Condolence A-Z
Box 12	Copies of letters to and from J.T. Adams
Box 13	Correspondence concerning the collection

Box 14 Correspondence with Irving Trust, 1930-1948

Series III: Manuscripts

Box 15 "An American Family". Typed manuscript
Note: restricted and unpublished

"An American Family". Typed manuscript (draft), with handwritten revisions pp. 76-106.

"America's Tragedy". Typed manuscript (unpublished).

Memorials of Old Bridgehampton. 1 volume, with handwritten revisions.

Box 16 "Empire on the Seven Seas"
Other manuscripts
Miscellaneous manuscripts and notes

Series IV: Ephemera and Photographs

Box 17 Awards and Degrees
Juvenilia
Memorabilia
Miscellaneous
Miscellaneous family documents
Pamphlets
Photographs

Series V: Scrapbooks and Newspapers

Box 18-19 Scrapbooks on the Supreme Court Number 1-4, 1932 and 1937

Box 20-21 Newspaper and magazine clippings by and about J.T. Adams

Box 22 Four scrapbooks of newsclippings; articles by and about J.T. Adams, 1928-1930

Series VI: Oversized Scrapbooks

Articles by and about J. T. Adams with handwritten notes in margins
2 volumes

New York Times: World's Fair supplement (sect. 8) ; article by J.T.A
3/5/39

Awards and degrees; watercolor. 1 folder

Series VII: Card File

Boxes 23-24 Nevins, Allen. Index to the papers prepared for and used by Allen Nevins for his biography of James Truslow Adams, 1968 [4 card file boxes]