

## NEW RESOURCES FOR AMERICAN STUDIES I

### THE HARRY S. TRUMAN LIBRARY--A NEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE MIDDLE WEST

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The article which follows is the first of a series of descriptions of new resources for students of American Civilization. In our next issue, Norman Holmes Pearson will discuss the new Mark Twain Museum and Library in Hartford, Connecticut.

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With the opening to scholars of a major portion of the Presidential papers of Harry S. Truman on May 11, 1959, a new Middle Western research center came into being, whose holdings should be of interest to all those concerned with the study of the American scene. While the archival materials in the Truman Library will be of particular usefulness to students of history and political science, they also contain much information which might be utilized by others engaged in the study of various aspects of American life and culture from an historical point of view. It will be the purpose of this article to give an account of the origins and special characteristics of the Library and to describe briefly the nature of its holdings.

The Truman Library, which was formally dedicated on July 6, 1957, was erected by a nonprofit corporation formed in 1950 to raise money for this purpose. Contributions toward the building fund were received from more than 17,000 individuals and organizations in all parts of the country. Upon completion title to the structure was turned over to the Federal Government. At the same time former President Harry S. Truman, one of our most history-minded Presidents, presented to the Nation for deposit in the Library building the papers accumulated by him during his nearly eight years in the White House. Transfer of the building and the papers to Federal ownership was made possible by the passage in 1955, with bipartisan support, of the Presidential Libraries Act authorizing acceptance by the Government of any such Presidential Library along with the papers and other historical materials in it. Under the provisions of this Act the Archivist of the United States, as head of the National Archives and Records Service of the General Services Administration, operates both the Truman Library and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park, New York, the latter having been originally taken over by the Government under the provisions of a Joint Resolution of Congress passed in 1939. The Dwight D. Eisenhower Library will be added in 1961. As part of the National Archives and Records Service these institutions have the advantage, both from the professional and the administrative point of view, of being a part of the Government's nationwide system of recordkeeping.

At this point it may be appropriate to inquire briefly into the raison d'etre of the Presidential Libraries, since it is important that not only the general public but also scholars understand it. Of all the offices in the Executive Branch of the United States Government the Presidential office (along with its appendage, the Office of the Vice President) is unique in having been established by the Constitution rather than by statute or executive order. Thus unlike the files of the departments and bureaus which are permanently retained by the Government, the papers created and received at the White House have been construed to be the President's private property, since he represents one of the three independent branches of our Federal structure. George Washington, when he retired to Mount Vernon in 1797, took his papers with him, and every succeeding President has followed his precedent. This custom has met with opposition and is still thought by some to be a questionable practice, but whenever it has been challenged in the courts it has always been upheld. Whatever the legal niceties, the papers of the Presidents are much more than merely the private files of one individual. They represent the historical record of one of the three coequal branches of our Government. In many cases they are the only records of Presidential actions we have, since, unlike the courts and Congress, the Office of the President has in the past had no official publication with the exception of formal executive orders and messages to Congress. Consequently, the papers of the Presidents are an invaluable source of information for those studying the history of past Presidential administrations. Unfortunately, however, the records of many of our former Presidents are no longer in existence. At present the Library of Congress holds collections for only twenty-three of our thirty-two former Chief Executives. Seventeen of these are major bodies of the existing papers of the respective Presidents, several of them having been purchased from the descendants of deceased Presidents at considerable cost. On the other hand, the files of a number of the Presidents have been either hopelessly dispersed or have been wilfully destroyed thereby leaving permanent gaps in our historical record.

The task of preserving an adequate record of Presidential actions has been made even more difficult over the past fifty years as a result of a tremendous increase in the size of the White House Office and in the scope of its responsibilities. The result has been that our modern Presidents leave office the owners of an overwhelming number of documents as compared with their predecessors. Whereas President Buchanan's papers number only 25,000 items for his four year term, the Presidents of today accumulate records at the rate of half a million or more a year. Moreover, they are the recipients of thousands of books and additional thousands of gifts, sent to them from all over the world, far more than they could ever use or enjoy themselves. To take care of, house and make available to the public these many diverse items, our recent Presidents have turned to the concept of the Presidential Library. Such an institution combines the advantages of decen-

tralization, both for security purposes and from the standpoint of scholarship, with the opportunity to house the related papers, books and mementos in one structure, in the care of a professional staff which, because it is dealing with a limited area, is able to gain a high degree of mastery over its field.

At present there are four Presidential Libraries in existence. The two oldest are the Hayes Memorial Library at Fremont, Ohio, owned by the State of Ohio and operated as a research center by the Hayes Foundation, and the Hoover Library at Palo Alto, California, which is privately endowed. The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and the Truman Library which are operated by the Government will be joined by the Eisenhower Library, now under construction, which will likewise be operated under Federal auspices upon its completion.

Although called a library principally as a generic term for a research institutions, the Truman Library is in reality a multi-purpose institution, being at once an archives, a book depository and a museum. The heart of the Library's archival holdings, and in fact the primary reason for its existence as a cultural institution, are Mr. Truman's Presidential papers. This is a vast collection of documents, approximately 5.5 million items in all, constituting all but a very small portion of the correspondence files of the nation's leading official during one of the most momentous periods in the country's history. The largest segment of these papers consists of material sent to the central file room of the White House by the President, his secretaries and other members of his staff. Included in this great mass of documents are the letters, drafts, memoranda, notes, maps and printed matter which document the history of the Nation's highest office during the years 1945 through 1952. Also in the collection are the office files of several of Mr. Truman's associates in the White House, the special counsels, administrative assistants, special assistants and aides, who did the preliminary groundwork on the basis of which Presidential decisions were made. Finally, the Presidential papers include the files of certain of the permanent White House offices for the Truman period. Among these are records of the Social Office, the Telegraph Office, the Telephone Office and the Office of the Official White House Reporter, the last being especially valuable in that they comprise a complete record of the President's public utterances.

In addition to his Presidential papers, Mr. Truman also presented to the nation at the time the Library was taken over by the Government the files representing his service as Senator and Vice President. Most of these date from his second Senatorial term and are valuable as a record of an important and formative period in his career. They do not, it should be noted, include the records of the Special Senate Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program, the so-called Truman Committee, the chairmanship of which first brought Mr. Truman into national prominence. While

the Library has transcripts of many of this Committee's hearings, the official records of that body are in Washington in the National Archives.

To investigate specific problems and make recommendations as to their solution, our Presidents have increasingly turned to the use of temporary ad hoc commissions and committees made up mainly of individuals appointed from private life. Since each of these bodies is identified with a particular Presidential administration, it is planned that their records be deposited in the appropriate Presidential Library, if such exists. Mr. Truman appointed more than twenty such commissions and committees. The records of four of these, the President's Airport Commission, the President's Committee on Civil Rights, the President's Committee on the Merchant Marine and the President's Committee on Religion and Welfare in the Armed Forces are now in the Truman Library. Transfer of the records of the remaining Presidential commissions and committees appointed by Mr. Truman, which are now in the National Archives, will be accomplished at some future date after necessary analysis of the records has been completed.

Under the terms of the agreement by which Mr. Truman transferred his papers to the Federal Government certain categories of records must be withheld from the public for the time being. These include papers containing classified security information which are closed by law, documents whose disclosure might be prejudicial to the conduct of foreign relations by present or future administrations, information given by or to the President in confidence in any official capacity and letters containing information which might subject living persons to harassment or embarrassment if their contents were revealed. To meet these requirements the Library's staff of archivists has had to review the greater part of the Presidential files document by document. While this has been a time consuming and sometimes tedious task, it has had the value of giving the reviewers a familiarity with the records which they would not otherwise have gained. To date more than 2 million pages of manuscripts have been examined and of this number between 80 and 85 per cent have been opened for research. It is expected that analysis of the remaining portions of the main Presidential files will have been completed by the end of the year. Documents that have been closed will then be subject to periodic rereview, so that restricted items can be made available once the need for restricting them has passed.

The Presidential Libraries Act of 1955 provides that in addition to papers of the Presidents, Presidential Libraries may accept for deposit the papers of other Government officials and other records "relating to and contemporary with any President or former President of the United States." In accordance with this provision and in order to supplement the material in the Presidential papers, the Library is actively engaged in a program looking toward the acquisition of the papers of members of Mr. Truman's Cabinet, others connected with his Administration and of persons who have

been associated with him in public and private life. In December 1959 Oscar L. Chapman, Secretary of the Interior from 1949 to 1953, announced that he was presenting his papers, numbering 27,500 items and covering the period 1931 to 1953, to the Library. This material deals with Interior Department matters during both the Roosevelt and Truman periods and represents the first large group of records received under this program. They will be opened to researchers once the Library staff has had the chance to unpack, arrange, classify and index them. Commitments for the transfer of their papers to the Library at some future date have been received from other former Cabinet members as well as from a number of individuals who played prominent roles in Mr. Truman's career, and it is expected that eventually a substantial body of records representing Mr. Truman's political and personal associates will be included among the Library's holdings.

Another provision of the Presidential Libraries Act permits the deposit in such Libraries of Federal records which, while not considered to be valuable enough to be kept in the National Archives, are of sufficient interest to students of regional history to warrant their permanent retention. While only a small number of records of this nature have been acquired so far, it is expected that the Library will eventually house an important collection of documents relating to the activities of the Federal Government in the Middle West.

In order to increase its usefulness as a center for historical research, the Library is supplementing its own manuscript holdings by the acquisition of microfilm copies of records on deposit in other institutions. This microfilm collection, which already numbers nearly 3800 rolls, has been procured from several sources. Reflecting Mr. Truman's interest in the development of the Presidential office, the Library is acquiring by purchase or gift available microfilm reproductions of papers of other Presidents. Under Congressional authorization the Library of Congress is at present engaged in the monumental task of microfilming its entire collection of Presidential papers. The files of two Presidents, William Henry Harrison and Zachary Taylor, have already been filmed, and copies of these are now at the Library. Microfilm copies of papers of other Presidents will be purchased from the Library of Congress as they become available. The Library has also acquired microfilm copies of the Adams papers, reproduced under the auspices of the Massachusetts Historical Society. These papers include not only the records of the two Presidents who belonged to the Adams family but in addition the papers of many of the other members of that productive clan.

Since 1940 the National Archives has been microfilming as a form of publication selected groups of its holdings that have high research value. The negatives of these films are retained in Washington and positive prints are made available to scholars and institutions at a considerably lower cost

than would be the case if the items filmed were selected on an individual basis. The Truman Library is now in the process of acquiring over a period of time a complete set of these microfilm publications. In this collection are reproductions of portions of the files of a great number of the Federal Government's departments and bureaus, with the State Department being especially well represented. Dating mostly from the 19th century, these records represent invaluable research material. While it would be impossible in the space available to give even a partial listing of the film titles included, the following sampling, selected at random from material already available at the Library, will give some idea of the richness of the materials in this collection: Diplomatic Despatches from United States Diplomatic Representatives in Russia, 1808-1906; Consular Despatches from United States Consular Representatives at Shanghai, 1847-1906; Letters Received by the Secretary of the Treasury from Collectors of Customs, 1833-69; Records Relating to the United States Military Academy, 1812-67; Correspondence of the Secretary of the Navy Relating to African Colonization, 1819-44; and Records of the Secretary of the Interior Relating to Wagon Roads, 1857-87.

Mention should also be made of microfilm copies of certain printed materials which the Library has acquired. These include complete runs of the Annals of Congress, Congressional Register, and Congressional Globe and of the Congressional Record to 1929 (The Library has printed copies of the Record from 1933 through 1953 and from 1954 to the present date). The microfilm collection also includes printed Hearings of the 82nd Congress; proceedings of all the National Conventions of both the Democratic and Republican National Parties through 1952; doctoral dissertations pertaining to Mr. Truman and the Truman Administration; and certain periodicals containing materials of historical interest. Inasmuch as President Truman played such an important role in the inception and development of the United Nations, the Library has acquired in the form of microprint the proceedings of that organization from its opening meeting through 1952. These include not only the records of the Security Council and the General Assembly but of several of the UN's subsidiary organizations as well.

In addition to its manuscripts the Library also has a large number of photographs, sound recordings and motion pictures among its holdings. The photograph collection, which at present consists of more than 4,600 items, is now catalogued and available for research purposes. While the accent is on the Presidential period, all phases of Mr. Truman's career are represented. The Library has a fully equipped photographic laboratory and researchers wishing to purchase reproductions of pictures for illustrative purposes may do so at a nominal cost. Many of the sound recordings in the Library's custody also have high research value, particularly the recordings of speeches and press conferences. Should a scholar wish to listen to a particular recording, arrangements can be made for him to do so. While

the Library does not now have recordings of all Mr. Truman's Presidential speeches, additional material of this nature will be acquired in the future. At present most of the Library's motion pictures are in the National Archives where the films are being copied as a matter of security. It is anticipated, however, that these films will be available at Independence within the next few years so that they can be made available to researchers for viewing in the Library's auditorium.

In assembling its book collection the Library has emphasized three fields, the Truman Administration including works by and about Mr. Truman and his associates, the history and nature of the Presidential office, and the field of foreign affairs, since historians are generally agreed that it is for his work in this area that Mr. Truman will be particularly remembered by future generations. The basic collection consists of approximately 9,000 books representing Mr. Truman's White House collection. It has been augmented by purchases, a large portion of which have been financed by a grant from The Rockefeller Foundation. The book collection presently consists of more than 20,000 volumes and in excess of 16,000 pamphlets, bulletins, reports and other unbound items. Among the additions to the collection over the past two years have been the libraries of the former Department of Historical Research of the Carnegie Corporation and that of Professor Samuel F. Bemis of Yale University, international authority in the field of diplomatic history. Professor Bemis' collection is well rounded and complements nicely the State Department records among the microfilm reproductions received from the National Archives. It is especially strong in the field of Latin American history and works about Presidents John Adams and John Quincy Adams. Insofar as books on the nature and history of the office of the Presidency are concerned, the Library does not expect to acquire every book written about every President. It will try to obtain, however, works which add significant information concerning the contributions which any particular President made to the development of the Executive Office. As for books on Mr. Truman and his Administration, the Library hopes to have a collection which is as definitive as possible.

It is in the museum section of the building that the general public comes into contact with the Library. During the first twenty-eight months of operation the museum was visited by 260,000 persons including nearly 40,000 in educational tour groups. However, in addition to their value for exhibition purposes, the more than 5,000 museum items in the Library, only a very small portion of which are on display, represent an additional tool for scholarly research. Individual items are of course of interest in themselves, ranging as they do all the way from valuable presents from heads of state to all sorts of miscellaneous bric-a-brac. But also taken together they constitute primary sources for studies of the various ways in which peoples from all over the world express their admiration of our First Citizens through the medium of gifts. Deserving of special mention is the mu-

seum's collection of more than 500 newspaper cartoons, most of them originals presented to Mr. Truman by the artists. They represent all phases of Mr. Truman's political career and are both pro and con in regard to their approach to the subject. As in the case of photographs, copies of these cartoons can be made for persons wishing to purchase them, although when the item is copyrighted permission to reproduce must be obtained from the copyright holder.

While it is not within the scope of this article to make an extensive list of topics which might be profitably investigated at the Truman Library, it is obvious that the Library's holdings contain raw material for research for many future generations of students. This is particularly true in the case of historians and political scientists. To date researchers working at the Library have been almost evenly divided between the two disciplines. However, scholars in other fields may also find much of interest here. The economist, delving into the history of the country's economic development, will surely find much material in these records since of late years the sciences of government and economics have become so closely intertwined. Sociologists and even psychologists may find grist for their mills among the mountains of public opinion mail received by the White House ranging from a few scattered letters regarding a matter of limited concern to the mountains of mail about the most controversial matter of all, judging by the amount of correspondence involved both pro and con, the dismissal of General MacArthur. For the specialist in musicology there are the hundreds of musical scores received at the White House as a result of Mr. Truman's (and his daughter's) well-advertised interest in music. The student of speech would certainly find much of value among the drafts of speeches in the files, the student of journalism in the transcripts of press conferences and the science historian in the records devoted to the Government's concern with various phases of scientific development. In short, the phases of American life and culture represented in these research materials are many and varied.

It should probably be stressed here that, generally speaking, no one who is doing advanced research in the Truman period will be able to obtain all his data at the Truman Library. For much of his information the average advanced student will have to go to Washington to use the records at the National Archives and in the Government departments, and in many cases private papers of other individuals deposited in Washington and elsewhere will also have to be utilized. This will almost always be the case where work on a doctoral dissertation is involved. Occasionally enough information for an article or for a master's thesis will be found at the Library, when the records are used in conjunction with books, reports, newspapers and other printed matter. Since the Truman Library is intended to be primarily an institution for advanced research by graduate students and others who have had experience in the use of original source material, it is

not contemplated that undergraduates will be allowed to use the historical materials in its custody. Exceptions, however, will be made insofar as the book collection is concerned in the case of advanced undergraduates who have had the appropriate educational background and are recommended by their instructors.

It may be of interest to make brief note here of the grants-in-aid program of the Harry S. Truman Library Institute for National and International Affairs. The Institute, a non-profit corporation, whose Board includes representatives of universities and close associates of Mr. Truman, has been established to promote the acquisition of reference and other materials for the Library and to assist generally in promoting the use of the Library's facilities. Under a grants-in-aid program established last spring the Institute has already made available funds to a number of needy and worthy students wishing to do work there. It is expected, if the necessary funds are available, that a limited number of additional grants will be made this spring.

The Harry S. Truman Library is located in Independence on U. S. Highway 24 ten miles east of downtown Kansas City, Missouri. The Library's research room is open from 8:45 A. M. to 4:45 P. M. Mondays through Fridays, and by special arrangement on Saturdays. Persons wishing to do research there should make application to the Director of the Library in writing somewhat in advance of their proposed visit and with the subject of their intended investigation outlined in some detail so that the staff may ascertain whether pertinent material is available. Applications from students should be accompanied by a letter of recommendation from their advisor. For those wishing to purchase reproductions of historical materials, the Library's photographic laboratory is equipped to make microfilm and xerox copies of the documents in its custody.

The Director of the Library is Dr. Philip C. Brooks, a career government archivist, who heads a professional staff of six archivists, two librarians, two museum curators and a photographer. All are willing and eager to help the scholar. While the Library is a national institution it is natural that, because of its location, a great many of its users will come from the Middle West. So far approximately one-third of the researchers visiting the Library have come from that area, and it is hoped that students from universities and colleges in the central part of the country will visit Independence in increasing numbers in the years ahead. As Mr. Truman has so well expressed it, "the papers of the Presidents are among the most valuable source materials for history. They ought to be preserved and they ought to be used."