The Creation of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library: A Personal Narrative[1]

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ON December 11, 1938, the readers of the Sunday newspapers learned that on the previous day President Franklin D. Roosevelt had announced to a party of 18 persons assembled at luncheon in the White House a long-cherished plan to present to the United States his already vast accumulation of correspondence and other papers, documents, books, pamphlets, pictures, and objects of personal or historic interest. He proposed to place these collections in a building which should be erected at private cost, on a plot of land donated to the United States from the estate then owned by his mother, on the Albany Post Road about 5 miles north of Poughkeepsie, N. Y. At the same time he announced his expectation that the rest of the hundred acres or more between the Post Road and the Hudson River, on which the family residence was situated, would, as he expressed it, "eventually go to the Federal Government to be maintained for the benefit of the public." Both the intention and the expectation have been realized.

The luncheon guests included, in addition to Judge Samuel I. Rosenman and Mr. Frank C. Walker, university presidents Ed-

[1] This paper is based upon materials in the author's file, kept as chairman of the Executive Committee, which will be transferred to the National Archives in due time, and in a special file in the office of the Archivist of the United States. Included in these files are such documents as correspondence of members of the Executive Committee, lists of members of committees, lists of guarantors of the cost of building the library, surveys of materials in the White House, memoranda by the President, incorporation and bylaws of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Inc., audit of receipts and expenditures of the corporation, transcripts of addresses at the cornerstone laying, November 19, 1939, and at the dinner of February 4, 1939, drafts of legislation, newspaper clippings, press releases, and the like.

"The Story of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library" by Robert D. W. Connor printed in *American Archivist,* 3:81-92 (Apr. 1940), contains supplemental information and appraisal. The article by Herman Kahn, Director of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, on "Research Materials at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library" in *American Archivist,* 12:149-161 (Apr. 1954), discusses the justification of the library project and describes the special and unusual nature of much of the material. It supplements in an important way the present article.

mund E. Day and Frank P. Graham; university professors, past or present, William E. Dodd, Frederic L. Paxson, Helen Taft Manning, Charles A. Beard, Felix Frankfurter, and Samuel Eliot Morison; librarians Randolph G. Adams and Julian P. Boyd; the Archivist of the United States, Robert D. W. Connor; the New York State Historian, Alexander C. Flick; and Archibald MacLeish, Stuart Chase, Ernest Lindley, and Marguerite Wells, the last being president of the League of Women Voters.

Of these, Judge Rosenman, Frank Walker, and Robert Connor were to have responsible parts in carrying out the undertaking. The first, closely associated with Roosevelt for many years and editor of the President's official papers, was said by the latter to be more familiar than anyone else with his collections; the second, Frank Walker, lawyer, corporation director, university trustee, former treasurer of the Democratic National Committee and later to be its chairman as well as Postmaster General, was to perform the task of securing the necessary funds; while the third, Robert Connor, was eventually to have general responsibility for the custody and administration of the collections. The absence of any representative of the Library of Congress, however, seems extraordinary when one considers that the Library had long been the chief depository of the Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, and many other presidential papers.

The ostensible purpose of the luncheon was to obtain the advice and approval of representative historians and other scholars respecting the President's proposal, and this advice was reported to be entirely favorable and the approval unanimous. (But had it been otherwise I do not think it would have made any difference.) The luncheon was followed by a special press conference in the White House study, where the President, seconded by Judge Rosenman and Professor Morison, further explained and commented on the plan.

"Some of the more politically-minded of the correspondents," as the *New York Times* described them (Dec. 11, 1938), asked the President how he came to decide upon the plan *at this time*; but, in the words of the *Times* report: "clearly sensing what was behind the question, Mr. Roosevelt laughed and replied with utter ease that he had been considering what to do with his collections for the last three or four years."

Perhaps this is a point at which a personal opinion may be expressed. I am convinced that in December 1938 the President fully expected to retire to Hyde Park at the close of his second term of

office. There can be no doubt that he looked forward to such retirement with pleasure and even eagerness. I recall his saying to me that the happiest day of his life would be that on which he saw the Army trucks, loaded with his papers, leave the White House grounds bound for Hyde Park. There could be no doubt of his satisfaction in looking forward to installing himself in the library which he was planning, free to work on whatever interested him. He had the instincts and the active interests of the historian, as the earlier President Roosevelt had had, and he longed to indulge them; and he had the instincts of the collector, as well. I also recall, with amusement, that in July 1940, on the eve of the Democratic National Convention, the President's mother said to me, in the family home at Hyde Park, "You know, I think he's going to come up here and settle down next winter." When I said that it would be fine if he could do so, she replied "Yes; he ought to." I reported this conversation to her brother, Frederick Delano, who said, "She doesn't know a thing about what he's going to do, any more than the rest of us."

But to return to December 11, 1938. As I read the newspaper reports I remembered that a few weeks earlier my long-time friend Sam Morison had told me that the President wanted to house all his papers and related materials in a special building to be constructed for that purpose on his estate at Hyde Park, and had asked me what I thought of the idea. I replied that I didn't think much of it. If the Library of Congress was good enough for the papers of Washington and Jefferson and Jackson, wasn't it good enough for those of Franklin D. Roosevelt? Sam had said that he was of similar mind, and so I was surprised to learn that he had become an advocate of the plan. I was much more surprised, a day or two later, to find that I too was not only advocating the project but was actively engaged in efforts to bring about its realization.

This is how that change came about. On Monday, December 12, Bob Connor came to my office and informed me that the President hoped I would agree to be chairman of a small "Executive Committee" to plan the construction and organization of the proposed depository. Since my acquaintance with Mr. Roosevelt had been limited to two or three brief sessions of the Naval History Society, which had been held in his office some 20 years before, while he was Assistant Secretary of the Navy, I did not suppose that the idea of my serving in the suggested capacity had originated with *him*. I was not surprised later to learn that Morison and Connor were responsible for it.

I confess that I was at a loss for a reply, or rather as to how I could tactfully decline a request from the President of the United States.

"But Robert," I said, "you know I am a Republican."

"I know that," he replied, "and that's all to the good."

"Furthermore," I continued, "I don't think that I approve the idea anyhow."

His reply was that that was still better. A Republican who didn't think he approved of the plan was ideal, but he was sure that I would approve of it after longer consideration.

"And still further," I said, "I have to go to Europe in April for 2 months; and in August I am to go to South America for 4 months."

That was more difficult for him to talk down, but he assured me that I would probably get the project well under way before leaving for Europe and that he himself would carry on for me during my absence.

So I yielded my points, except on being a Republican.

The next day came a note from the President asking me to serve as chairman of the Executive Committee and to attend a luncheon at the White House with the other members of the committee on the following Saturday.

These other members, in addition to Bob Connor and Sam Morison, were Randolph G. Adams, librarian of the William L. Clements Library of the University of Michigan; Judge Charles E. Clark, just then in transition from the deanship of the Yale University Law School to the bench of the U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals; Helen Taft Manning, dean of Bryn Mawr College; and Stuart A. Rice, on leave from the University of Pennsylvania to serve as chairman of the Central Statistical Board.

It was necessary to prepare at once for the first meeting of the committee, which must be held before our luncheon conference with the President, barely 4 days later. A rapid analysis of the problem was in order; and this indicated that we must consider such matters as the functions and responsibilities of the committee, the relation of the proposed establishment to the Federal Government together with such new legislation as might be necessary, the various kinds and quantities of materials to be housed in the depository, their space requirements in architectural and structural terms, and the probable cost of the building and its equipment.

The Executive Committee held its first meeting in the office of the Archivist of the United States on December 17, with all mem-

bers present except Judge Clark, who had to be in New Orleans. We had much talk about the recommendations we should make to the President at luncheon and especially about the questions we should put to him. We agreed that our functions were advisory and that we should have no responsibility for raising funds, although we would be ready with moral support and arguments in favor of the plan and with suggestions as to likely "prospects" and the best approach to them, especially through academic and scholarly circles.

I suggested that the committee itself might have various expenses and I agreed to seek a small fund to meet them. Thanks to the sympathetic interest of President Keppel of the Carnegie Corporation, a grant of $1,500 was made available for our needs; but we were not, I am glad to say, an expensive committee. I was able to refund to the Carnegie Corporation something like $800 of its subsidy.

It was clear that new legislation would have to be enacted in order to enable the Government to accept the gifts of collections, land, and building and to provide for their administration. Dr. Connor undertook to see that this was drafted.

We had only vague ideas as to the nature and bulk of the various collections of papers, books, and objects; and we agreed that a rapid survey of them must be made at once by persons of special competence. Especially we needed an expert of the highest qualifications for advice on questions of design, construction, and equipment. Our choice inevitably was of Louis A. Simon, supervising architect of the Treasury Department, who had had responsibility for the magnificent National Archives Building, in which we were meeting.

These and other matters occupied our time and attention until the hour for luncheon at the White House. There we were joined by Judge Rosenman, Mr. Walker, and — as a surprise — Vice President Garner, who had returned from his long vacation or "walk-out" and who was meeting the President for the first time in several months.

We sat in our places at the round table, waiting for the President to arrive. In a moment he was wheeled down the hall and up to his seat in our midst. When he spied the Vice President there ensued a boisterous greeting with back-slapping and jovial quips. After lifting himself by his arms into his chair at the table, the President announced that his first Christmas present had been received; and as he spoke it was brought in for us to see. It was a mounted deer's head, the gift of the Vice President. Connor asked the latter if it

was the head of the tame deer that he was reported to have shot by mistake but was positively assured it was not.

As chairman of the committee it was my duty to direct discussion to the problems which we had been considering and on which we needed the President's advice. He took special interest in describing the nature and variety of his collections, agreed that a survey should be made by specialists, and explained what he had in mind as to the building itself. This he wished to be in the form of an open square, of natural field stone, one story in height with a high-pitched roof, and in an architectural style that he termed Dutch colonial, referring to the recently constructed postoffice building at Rhinebeck, some 10 miles above Hyde Park, as an illustration. He was eager that ample provision should be made not only for his papers and books but for the display of a vast number of miscellaneous objects, such as pictures, ship models, and articles presented to him; and he wished to include special rooms for his naval collections and for those on the history of Dutchess County. Especially he expressed the hope that members of his administration would be led to add their own papers to his, in due time.

He asked us to complete the membership of a National Advisory Committee, of which the persons who had lunched with him a week earlier would be the nucleus.

I reported to the President that the Executive Committee unanimously recommended that the name of the establishment should be the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library. At this he demurred; he would have preferred a name of topographical significance, and he did not wish the library to be a personal memorial. We supported our recommendations with realistic arguments; and in the end the President agreed, with apparent reluctance. After the luncheon our committee withdrew to the Cabinet Room, where we sat in the seats of the mighty and concluded our discussion.

The organizational setup of the operation quickly took shape. The Executive Committee, of 7 members, was to have general direction; the National Advisory Committee, of 30 members, historians and other scholars, was to supply a background of professional interest and competence and was to be relied upon for moral support and encouragement. A third committee, which already existed as a group and which we discreetly christened the Committee on Ways and Means, was made up of the 63 underwriters of the project, men of substance who had put up a collective guarantee of $450,000. (We were, however, careful that this

evidence of Frank Walker's foresight should not receive publicity during the ensuing campaign for funds.)

The 30 members of the National Advisory Committee, each of whom was personally invited by the President to serve, included, besides those already mentioned as attending the luncheon of December 10, Guy Stanton Ford, president of the University of Minnesota; St. George L. Sioussat, chief of the Division of Manuscripts of the Library of Congress; Douglas S. Freeman; Herbert E. Bolton, of the University of California; Edwin F. Gay, of the Huntington Library; Ralph H. Lutz, of Stanford University, director of the Hoover Library; Bessie L. Pierce, of the University of Chicago; Walter P. Webb, of the University of Texas; Monsignor Peter Guilday, of the Catholic University of America; Harry M. Lydenberg, director of the New York Public Library; William E. B. Du Bois of Atlanta University; Mildred Thompson, dean of Vassar College; Robert C. Binkley, of Western Reserve University; Allan Nevins, of Columbia University; and Lothrup C. Harper — together with Basil O'Connor, Judge Rosenman, and Frank Walker.

Equally important as the committees and necessary to the achievement of their purpose was an operating agency. This was created, under the membership-corporation law of New York, as the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Inc. The forehanded Frank Walker had already drafted a certificate of incorporation with a complete set of bylaws; and these the Executive Committee examined and approved. Three of us — Sam Morison, Randolph Adams, and I — joined with Mr. Walker and Basil O'Connor to become the first trustees of the corporation. The certificate of incorporation was filed on December 22, with the consent of the Department of Education of New York State and that of Franklin D. Roosevelt to the use of his name.

The declared purposes of the corporation were to construct and equip a building or buildings at Hyde Park, or elsewhere, either for the corporation or for the United States, for the housing and preservation of such historical materials as Franklin D. Roosevelt might give, bequeath, or transfer to the corporation or to the United States, as well as any other acceptable historical materials; and to provide for the custody and maintenance of such buildings and historical materials, making the latter available to students, scholars, historians, teachers, and others until ownership and control should be taken over by the United States. The corporation had power to solicit, accept, borrow, invest, and expend money, and

to transfer property to the United States provided that adequate legislation should have been enacted for the acceptance of such property and for its permanent care and maintenance.

The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Inc., was thus not only an operating agency for obtaining funds and constructing and equipping a building, but it was also a hedge against the failure of Congress (most unlikely in 1939) to enact the necessary enabling legislation. In the event of such failure, however, the corporation would have been obliged to seek endowment or other permanent funds for the perpetual maintenance of the establishment.

The committees and the corporation got to work at once, carrying on their various tasks simultaneously.

Before architectural sketches could be made it was necessary to undertake a rapid survey of the probable contents of the building, in order to determine the various kinds and quantities of equipment that would be needed, such as filing drawers and other containers, exhibit cases, and bookshelves, and to estimate the requirements of the materials and their containers in terms of floor and wall space as well as in terms of accommodations for staff, researchers, and the visiting public.

To start with we had only the President's statement given to the press on December 10, 1938, in which he had described, in summary fashion, the nature of his collections but had given no indication as to their volume. The relevant paragraphs of this statement are quoted here in order to indicate the state of our knowledge before the survey was made.

> Since 1910 — or in other words for a period of twenty-eight years — I have carefully preserved all of my correspondence, public papers, pamphlets, books, etc. This includes all incoming material and copies of practically all outgoing material. These years cover my service of nearly three years in the New York State Senate; seven and one-half years as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, including the World War period and two trips to Europe; my business and legal correspondence; much political material between 1920 and 1928, including my campaign for the Vice Presidency, the 1924 Convention, and the 1928 Convention; my campaign for Governor in 1928 and 1930; all of my personal papers as Governor of New York, 1929-33; the campaigns for the Presidency, 1932 and 1936; and all of my Presidential papers from March 4, 1933, to date. . . .
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> I have also two rather specialized collections which are of some definite historical value: a collection of paintings, drawings, prints, manuscript letters and documents, log-books, pamphlets and books relating to the American Navy from 1775 to date; and a smaller collection of similar material relating to the Hudson River, and especially Dutchess County and the town of Hyde

Park. These collections would be placed in the proposed building, together with the public papers, etc.

I have also a very large number of books and pamphlets — far more than my children could possibly use — many of them inscribed by their authors to me. The bulk of these books would also be added to the contents of the building and, incidentally, they form the nucleus of a library relating to this period which would be available to students in the future.

The necessary surveys were undertaken at once, and the reports were communicated to the members of the Executive Committee on December 27. Fred W. Shipman of the National Archives, who appropriately was later appointed to be the first director of the library, surveyed the books and records in the White House and in the old State, War, and Navy Building, including Mrs. Roosevelt's file; he estimated a total volume of 6,117 linear feet or 4,774 cubic feet. In addition he reported 50 boxes of correspondence in Albany.

A special survey of oversize material suitable for flat filing was made by W. L. G. Joerg, then chief of the Division of Maps and Charts of the National Archives. This material consisted of Currier and Ives prints, prints picturing Revolutionary War personages, naval and nautical prints, engravings, and maps — occupying an estimated wall space of 1,000 square feet. It also included about 220 cubic feet of scrapbooks, photograph albums, clippings, pamphlets, and folio and other oversize volumes. If flat-filed, all this material would fill some 50 cases, occupying about 500 square feet of floor space.

The survey of museum objects was made by Laurence Vail Coleman, director of the American Association of Museums. He found 400 pictures, 37 ship models, and a vast number of smaller objects, such as gifts, "official tokens" and so forth. Dr. Coleman estimated that, if these items were compactly displayed, the equivalent of two rooms, 30 x 50 ft., divided into alcoves, would be necessary.

In addition to these surveys, Vernon D. Tate, chief of the Division of Photographic Archives and Research of the National Archives, provided a plan for a small photographic laboratory; and Arthur E. Kimberly of the National Archives submitted estimates of space necessary for cleaning and fumigating incoming material.

The surveys were limited to what was on hand and viewable, mostly in Washington. They could not include accurate estimates of materials located elsewhere, as for example in the Roosevelt mansion at Hyde Park, or in the town house in New York, or at Albany. They could only guess at probable increases, either by nat-

ural accretion or by gift; and, above all, they did not even imagine that President Roosevelt's term of office might extend beyond January 1941. We had little idea then, in the closing days of 1938, of the vast expansion that the collections were to undergo or of the great crowds of visitors who were to put such a strain upon the accommodations for them; but we agreed that the utmost possible provision, within the limits of available funds, should be made for future growth.

Using the information thus gathered, Louis Simon was at work on the preliminary plans before the end of December. The external appearance of the building — the open square, the "Dutch colonial" style — had already been prescribed by the President. Now it was possible to block out the interior — the stack space, the exhibit rooms, the research room, and the President's own study. In all this planning the President took an active part.

On January 5, 1939, Mr. Simon brought tentative sketches to the White House offices, where the President, Dr. Connor, and I studied them with him. This was only the first of many such conferences, for the President was always happy to take up pencil and pad and sketch out what he had in mind. On a hot July afternoon, when I had been summoned to the White House and the President, after all, had been unable to get around to our business, General Watson confided to me: "The President's awfully sorry; he simply can't make it today, and he wants to know if you could come again tomorrow. I *know* he'd rather talk over the plans for that library than do anything else."

So the following afternoon I found the President in his office, sleeves rolled up, collar unbuttoned, and doors and windows wide open to let in all the heat there was.

"Well," he greeted me, "we spent a lot of money air-conditioning this place, but they made a lousy job of it."

"Mr. President," I said, "I always understood that you have to keep the doors and windows of an air-conditioned room *shut*, and here they are all *open*."

"Oh, I know all about that," he replied, "but it doesn't make a damn bit of difference here."

That, I think, was the time we discussed the question of air-conditioning the library and decided that we would be content to install the pipes and conduits and would leave the rest of the equipment to a later date. It was easy to believe, on that summer afternoon in Washington, that it must be always cool at Hyde Park on the banks of the Hudson.

Early in January 1939 Bob Connor and I were asked to lunch with the President at his desk in order to have more time to discuss plans and problems. It was an interesting experience. First the gadgets and oddities that covered most of his desk top had to be cleared away to make room for our plates. A huge food warmer was then rolled in, which the President opened, burning his fingers. The menu included baked grapefruit, mushrooms and muffins, and gingerbread with whipped cream. We talked as we ate, for we had much to discuss. Would Mrs. Roosevelt place her papers in the library? The President said, "My Missus seems interested; I think she'll go along; I'll ask her." So we agreed that we would invite her to go along; and, I am glad to say, she has.

What sort of containers should we use for the correspondence and other papers? We settled for the buckram-covered fiber boxes in use in the White House. We decided that no papers in the White House should be destroyed before their transfer to the library and their arrangement and examination there. This was a point of considerable importance, for it had been customary for Presidents (with the exception of Herbert Hoover) upon leaving the White House to destroy substantial quantities of papers as having little or no value. The President repeated his hope that members of the Cabinet would place their own papers, or at least the relevant ones, with his, in the library; but he hesitated to invite them to do so. It was understood that Dr. Connor should make the approaches to them in this matter, in his capacity as Archivist of the United States.

Finally we discussed the problem of exhibiting the museum objects — the pictures, the ship models, gifts to the President, objects associated with his life, and the thousands of little gadgets of which those on his desk were examples. This was a matter in which the President was especially interested. I recall that in a later conference I expressed the fear that we might be allotting too much space to the museum functions of the library. To this the President replied, "Well, you know, if people have to pay a quarter to get into the library they will want to see something interesting inside."

More than two million persons have paid their quarters, and they have certainly seen much that is interesting and some things that are strange as well.

Perhaps this is the appropriate place for diversionary comment on the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library as a museum. The visitor is immediately impressed and perhaps a little overcome by the great variety of objects on display and by the immense number of them. Gifts from the governments and peoples of all countries, many of

them of great splendor and beauty, illustrate more vividly than written documents the central place that the President of the United States holds in the world of today. A big room in the basement is filled with every sort and description of the little things that are sent to the President by thousands of people. The room is appropriately called the "oddities room." Cigarette holders, donkeys, and figurines abound; and at the end of the room, facing you as you enter, is a heroic-size bust in *papier-maché* from a cartoon by Clifford Berryman — the head of Roosevelt, sphynx-like, with an 18-inch cigarette holder protruding from the mouth. The face seems to welcome you in jovial fashion to the exhibition of oddities and caricatures.

Nearby, in the "carriage room" are family vehicles, including a sleigh, said to have belonged once to Napoleon III, a family carriage of the tycoon era, and two iceboats; one of which the President sailed on the frozen Hudson in the winters of his youth. Part of the wall of the building had to be taken down to make possible the entrance of the other iceboat, a 48-footer that belonged to the President's uncle. It was with such objects in mind that Samuel Morison, in the address that he delivered at the library in 1941, on the occasion of its dedication, appealed to the friends and neighbors of the President not to donate their hair-trunks or similar family relics to the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library. I heard that the President was slightly irked by this admonition, but it had my complete approval. I understand that now the specially equipped Ford which the President drove has been added to the collections.

The museum objects are displayed in rotation, for it would be impossible to exhibit them all at the same time. They constitute a real problem and make the functioning of the library as a research center more difficult. But the entrance fees of the museum have contributed something like $425,000 after tax deduction to a special income account that is drawn upon heavily each year for the work of the library. On June 30, 1953, the balance of this account was $199,000, after expenditures during the fiscal year of $37,400.

The plans of the building were developed rapidly, and by February 4, 1939, Mr. Simon was able to exhibit, at the dinner which opened the campaign for funds, tentative sketches including the plot plan, the floor plans, the elevations and sections, and a perspective drawing showing the library as viewed from the direction of the Albany Post Road. I hope that some time we may have from Mr. Simon an architect's account of his labors and of the part that the President personally took in them.

While the President was interested in all details of landscaping, construction, and equipment, and had much special knowledge of such matters, I think that the design of his study was all his own. He contributed the Dutch tiles that frame the fireplace; he designed little shelves that can be pulled out from the walls; he selected the furniture. In July 1940 he showed the room with pride to Mrs. Leland and me and eagerly asked her what she thought of it.

As plans for construction took shape, it became possible to estimate costs. By the end of January these were placed at approximately $350,000, including equipment. In actual fact they were slightly over $367,000.

How was this money raised? Some of it began to come in as soon as the President announced his plan. The first donation, of a dollar, accompanied by a letter of December 11 to the President came from a member of Boy Scout Troop 326 of Brooklyn, who said that he had "at present a great many things which I may add to your collection." Other letters from enthusiastic admirers also enclosed dollar bills, which were returned to the donors with appreciative acknowledgement from Marvin McIntyre, secretary to the President, and with the suggestion that they be sent to Frank Walker.

In his press conference of December 10 the President explained that the proceeds from his published writings received by himself and Judge Rosenman would be contributed to the library fund, making two precampaign donations of $7,500 each.

It was the President's hope that the fund to be received would be made up largely of modest contributions. There was even talk of putting a ceiling of $1,000 on them, but I do not think that this was done. Nor did we wish to make any public appeal for subscriptions. Raising money was the first function of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Inc., and was the special task of the corporation's treasurer, Frank Walker. No one could have done it more tactfully or more successfully. It was agreed that the campaign should be opened with a dinner in Washington, attended by the President and by the members of the three committees. The corporation planned this affair and bore the expense of it. The dinner was held in the Carlton Hotel on February 4, 1939, with 55 persons seated about a horseshoe table. Since I was chairman of the Executive Committee it fell to me to preside and to serve as toastmaster. The speakers were Samuel Morison, Guy Stanton Ford, Basil O'Connor, Henry Morgenthau, Sr., and the President.

Professor Morison presented the historical background of the

project, telling what had happened to the papers of earlier Presidents of the United States. This was a story of great interest and even exciting in spots, recounted with characteristic brilliance and humor. Professor Morison told how the Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Jackson papers had come to the Library of Congress; how papers of other Presidents had been scattered or destroyed; how those of the Adams's and of Presidents Hayes and Hoover were preserved in private or institutional libraries; and how those of Presidents Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Taft, and Coolidge had come to the Library of Congress from their families, with restrictions on their use. In conclusion he said:

> Thus, at Hyde Park, if these plans, as we hope and believe, are successful, it will be the first time that the collections and manuscripts of a President of the United States have been kept together in their entirety, without anything lost or destroyed, for the use of the historians and for the use of the generations of Americans who are to come after us.

Guy Stanton Ford then spoke with feeling and eloquence of the significance of President Roosevelt's papers as a record and an illustration of the democratic process:

> It is my profound conviction that out of a library such as this, accumulated over the years by one who has been in the strategic position of the donor, will come a revelation of American life and thought, all the more valuable for these thousands and thousands of letters that come from people who unburden themselves about trivial matters; and that it will be, for the historians of the future, material out of which they will build a great, revealing picture of this Nation, which, suddenly, within the last few decades, has come to realize that youth has passed, that it has reached middle age, and that it faces problems that this democracy, on this continent, has not faced before.

Basil O'Connor followed with an appeal to those present to interest themselves actively in the realization of the plan. The project, he pointed out, would not be self-creating nor would it carry itself through automatically; "it calls for and needs money." He did not ask those present to turn themselves into "salesmen or agents," but he did ask for their moral support and their assistance in enlisting the interest of others.

Mr. Morgenthau, Sr., expressed his belief that there would be no difficulty in obtaining the necessary funds. He was sure that if the meaning of the plan was explained to the public they would rally to its support.

The President told, in an intimate way and in his happiest manner, of the beginnings and growth of his collections. He recalled that at the age of 20 he was elected librarian of the Hasty Pudding

Club at Harvard, and, having a small fund at his disposal, he sought the advice of a famous book dealer on Cornhill. The President continued:

> One of the first things that old man Chase said to me was, "Never destroy anything." Well, that has been thrown in my teeth by all the members of my family almost every week that has passed since that time. I have destroyed practically nothing. As a result, we have a mine for which future historians will curse me as well as praise me. It is a mine which will need to have the dross sifted from the gold. I would like to do it, but the historians tell me I am not capable of doing it. . . . It is a very conglomerate, hit-or-miss, all-over-the-place collection on every man, animal, subject, or material. But, after all, I believe it is going to form an interesting record of this particular quarter of a century . . . to which we belong.

At the close of the dinner the sketch plans of the library were exhibited, and the guests gathered about the President to examine them and to listen to Mr. Simon's explanations.

The active campaign opened up at once, but, though active, it was very quiet; it sought no publicity and received little. Frank Walker, who had been unable to attend the dinner of February 4, because of the death of a near relative, started on a trip west in March, to solicit funds in a number of centers. On behalf of the Executive Committee I wrote to all its members and to those of the Advisory Committee, to bespeak their cooperation and to tell them of Mr. Walker's desire to meet with persons in the academic world and to have their advice and suggestions. I also wrote, more specifically, to certain members of the Advisory Committee and other university persons in the regions which Mr. Walker was to visit, asking them to arrange for conferences with him. Several of the conferences were very successful. At the University of Chicago Bessie Pierce organized a conference that was attended by several members of the faculty, including Charles E. Merriam and Prof. (now Senator) Paul H. Douglas. In Minneapolis President Ford was exceedingly helpful and furnished Mr. Walker with amusing comments on conservative and other attitudes with respect to the project. In Seattle, in San Francisco, in Los Angeles, and elsewhere, university people were equally cooperative. Many members of the Advisory Committee in other regions sent useful suggestions; and in these and other ways, such as by personal contributions, the committee fully justified its existence.

The campaign was successful in that the total of the contributions amounted to $400,000. It was even more successful in that the contributions were made by some 28,000 persons.

The dinner of February 4 had been immediately preceded by the second and, as it turned out, the last full meeting of the Executive Committee. In this session several members of the Advisory Committee, who had come for the dinner, joined us and we had the benefit of their counsel. We reviewed the progress that had been achieved since December 17, examined the sketch plans, and discussed especially the drafted enabling legislation. Dr. Connor had been diligent to take this matter up with the Department of Justice, and a first draft of a joint resolution was ready by December 21, 1938, only 4 days after the first meeting of the Executive Committee. Amended drafts followed, and the President had suggestions of his own to make: he wished the library to be authorized to receive materials on loan, as well as to accept them by gift; he wanted the Treasury Department authorized to make its services available for the preparation of building plans, subject to reimbursement for the expense involved, but he insisted on a prior agreement with the Secretary of the Treasury that the reimbursement should not exceed $10,000; finally, since the legislation was to authorize the acceptance of the Roosevelt residence, subject to life tenancy by himself, he wished to have it provided that the life tenant should continue to pay local and State taxes.

The final draft of the joint resolution was introduced in the Senate and the House of Representative on April 19, 1939 (S. J. Res. 118; H. J. Res. 268) and passed the Senate on the following day. In the House the Committee on Library held a hearing on May 7; no witnesses were called, but supporting written statements by several members of the Executive and Advisory Committees were incorporated in the record. The House Committee reported favorably on May 10. Two months later the resolution passed the House by a partisan vote of 231 to 124, after a lively debate, and was sent back to the Senate with minor amendments. It was finally approved on July 18.

The legislation deals with both the library and the residence. With respect to the former it authorizes the Archivist of the United States (1) to accept title to the land to be used as the site of the library; (2) to permit the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Inc., to construct a building or buildings on the site, to be known as the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, and to landscape the grounds; (3) to accept for the library, as a gift, the historical materials donated by Franklin D. Roosevelt; and (4) to acquire other contemporary or relevant historical materials by gift, purchase, or loan.

The legislation also created a Board of Trustees consisting of the

Secretary of the Treasury and the Archivist, with the latter as chairman, and five other members appointed for life by the President. This board is authorized to accept gifts of personal property and to hold them, as trust funds, for the benefit of the library.

A significant clause provides that

> The faith of the United States is pledged . . . that the United States will provide such funds as may be necessary for the upkeep of the said Library and the administrative expenses and costs of operation thereof, including the preservation and care of historical material . . . so that the . . . Library shall be at all times properly maintained.

The care of the building and grounds, at first assigned to the Public Buildings Administration, was transferred in 1946 to the National Park Service, which also administers the Roosevelt mansion. The administration of the library itself is a duty of the Archivist of the United States, for the library is a division of the National Archives and Records Service.

As soon as the enabling legislation was approved, the President in a simple ceremony on July 24 transferred title to the site to the United States. On August 11 the Archivist authorized the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Inc., to proceed with the construction of the building, and on September 5 the corporation let the contract to John McShain. Ground was broken on September 14, and on November 19 the cornerstone was laid by the President. On July 4, 1940, less than 19 months after the President had announced his plans, the completed building was turned over to the Government by the corporation, and the task of the Executive Committee was ended. A year later, on June 30, 1941, after the corporation had landscaped the grounds and equipped the building; and after a considerable number of museum objects had been installed, the library was formally dedicated and the exhibit rooms were opened to the public.

The following years were years of war, and the small staff of the library was reduced. The President transferred substantial bodies of material from time to time and these had to be processed and arranged. He himself, during his brief sojourns at Hyde Park, visited the library and gave advice and made suggestions as to many details. Various Government agencies, and especially the White House, called for documents and information, and there was no possibility of opening the library for purposes of research until May 1, 1946, when the search room was opened, but with restricted access to papers.

The death of President Roosevelt on April 12, 1945, created a

situation of much difficulty and urgency for the library. More than half of his papers, some 2,500 cubic feet, had not been transferred during his lifetime and were presumed to belong to his estate, leaving the transfers to be made by his executors. These had to obtain court permission to do so, since there was no mention of the papers in the President's will.

A problem of major importance was the identification of certain categories of papers which should not be given to the library or which should be given only with restrictions as to their use.

On this matter, the President had left a memorandum of July 16, 1943, addressed to the director of the library. In it he explained his intention of going through his personal or confidential files in order to select those which should never be made public, or which should be sealed for a prescribed period, or which dealt only with family matters and should be retained by the family. The memorandum stated that if he should be unable to carry out this intention he wished the selection to be performed by a committee of three: Samuel Rosenman, Harry Hopkins, and Grace Tully, or the survivors. Since Harry Hopkins died soon after the President, Judge Rosenman and Miss Tully had to perform the process of selection, which they did with the active assistance of the library staff.

By 1951 this long and difficult task had been accomplished, and it was possible to make the bulk of the President's papers, about 85 percent, available for research. A final ceremony in the library on March 17, 1951, the forty-sixth anniversary of the marriage of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, celebrated this full realization of the President's plan.

In this rapid survey I have tried to show why and how this institution came into being. I have hinted at, but not discussed, the many issues which have been raised and which will long persist. By way of conclusion I should like to quote from two addresses delivered at Hyde Park on different occasions.

When the cornerstone was laid, in 1939, Archibald Mac Leish — who was then Librarian of Congress and who, in that capacity, did not resent the creation of the new library which was to hold much that might have gone to the older institution — said:

> The records which will be collected here are the records . . . of an Era and a Time. They are the records of a period in which the strong and restless life of the American people refused to accept the world as it had been and demanded that the world become the world their longing could imagine. They

are the records of the speaking and acting of a man who, more than any other man, has been the Actor and the Speaker of this time . . . the man who demanded for his generation what his generation had the courage to demand. As such they have the unity which history remembers and even living men can see.

At the dedication of the library in June 1941 the President said:

It seems to me that the dedication of a library is an act of faith. To bring together the records of the past and to house them in buildings where they will be preserved for the use of men and women in the future, a nation must believe in three things:

It must believe in the past.

It must believe in the future.

It must, above all, believe in the capacity of its own people so to learn from the past that they can gain in judgment in creating their own future.

. . . We hope that millions of our citizens from every part of the land will be glad that what we do today makes available to future Americans the story of what we have lived, and what we are living today, and what we will continue to live during the rest of our lives.

I will add only my own comment, from my address at the final ceremony, March 17, 1951.

Many will use these documents. Some will seek only to support one or the other side of controversies, to attack or to defend, to magnify or to belittle, and such users will be too often content to lift passages from their context and to distort their meaning. But the use of these collections to add valid and enduring knowledge will be the work of those who, competent in the patient and careful methods of research, have one purpose only — to know the truth.