AMBROSE/NIXON COLLECTION, ADDENDUM 1

(Mss 205)

Inventory

Earl K. Long Library
University of New Orleans

December 1988

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Summary

Size: 3 linear feet

Geographic Locations: New York, Washington, New Orleans and other places


Summary: Research materials gathered by Dr. Stephen E. Ambrose for his biography of Richard M. Nixon. Includes photocopies of newspaper clippings, pages from the State Papers of the Presidents, correspondence, memoranda, and notes in the National Archives, correspondence, notes, and photocopies of secondary sources created and/or assembled by Dr. Ambrose.

Related Collections: Ambrose/Nixon Collection (Mss 180)
Richard M. Nixon (1913-1994) took office as the thirty-seventh President of the United States on January 20, 1969. He campaigned on promises to end the Vietnam War (1959-1975), reduce racial divisions in the United States, and decrease the nation's high inflation rate. Despite his ambitious plans, Nixon's accomplishments are often overshadowed by the scandal for which his presidency is best known. Nixon's personal anger and suspicions manifested themselves in the Watergate criminal and political scandal, first revealed to the public through the news of an interrupted burglary at the offices of the Democratic National Committee in Washington, D.C. As evidence of his wrongdoings mounted, Nixon resigned rather than face impeachment by Congress.

Nixon was born in 1913 on a modest farm in California and was raised in the Quaker faith. He was an aggressive and successful student from an early age, graduating in 1934 from Duke University Law School on a full scholarship. After graduation he worked for the federal government and later as a military attorney during World War II (1939-1945). Nixon's humble but aggressive style caught the attention of others, who encouraged him to enter political life.

His active political career resembled a roller coaster ride. He served as President Dwight Eisenhower's (1953-1961) vice president, and was unusually active in the role. But Nixon lost his campaign to succeed Eisenhower in 1961 when he was defeated by John F. Kennedy (1961-1963). In 1962, Nixon again lost a bid for public office, failing to gain the governor's seat of his native state, California. This series of defeats ended his political career for a time and Nixon returned to practicing law. But when the political climate in the United States shifted in the late 1960s, Nixon saw new opportunities and prepared a presidential campaign.
During his campaign, Nixon promised a quick end to the Vietnam War, which was the source of much social unrest at home, but once in office he actually expanded the war before decreasing American involvement in the region. Though Nixon did not follow through on his Vietnam promises, he did achieve an arms treaty with the Soviet Union in 1972. Relations with that country were quite strained at the time, and the arms treaty, limiting strategic nuclear weapons, was a timely foreign policy success.

War was not the only item on Nixon's foreign policy agenda. It also included economics. Nixon re-opened trade and economic relations with China, which were severed in the early 1950s due to China's involvement with North Korea during the Korean War (1950-1953). Renewed relations between the two countries opened up a wealth of new business opportunities. The vast Chinese market appealed to many businesses and trade was quickly established. He also proposed a steep tax on imported goods and a freeze on all wage and price increases for ninety days. Nixon's efforts to stabilize the inflation-ridden U.S. economy helped reduce the national debt and the rate of inflation. It also asserted the primacy of business vitality over the artificial economic ties to the value of gold.

Tying the U.S. dollar to the value of gold was seen by Nixon as an economic restriction. By ending the U.S. dollar's attachment to the gold standard, Nixon asserted he had done something long overdue, claiming "The strength of a nation's currency is based on the strength of that nation's economy." With his action the Gold Standard Act of 1900 ended. The nation's currency became subject to the floating exchange rates of the marketplace and endured well.

Nixon's accomplishments as president are often overshadowed by the events that consumed his second term in office, beginning in 1972. Known collectively as the Watergate scandal, these events include criminal acts against Nixon's perceived enemies. Watergate first came to national attention when a break-in of the Democratic National Committee offices in the Watergate building was interrupted. The culprits eventually revealed ties to the White House and Congress ordered an investigation. Nixon was very uncooperative and denied personal involvement in the affair. However, Congress's determination to get to the bottom of the scandal revealed that Nixon was indeed involved. Rather than face almost certain impeachment and removal from office, Nixon resigned on August 4, 1974, leaving the presidency in disgrace.

Nixon went into seclusion for a time and later regained a kind of elder statesman status. He wrote several books on foreign policy and politics, including a personal memoir of his life. Nixon died of a stroke in 1994, at the age of eighty-one.
Container List

205-12 Notes.  n.d.

Photocopies of newspaper clippings, pages from the State Papers of the Presidents, correspondence, memoranda, and notes in the National Archives.

205-10 August 8, 1972 - 1981.

Index Terms

Ambrose, Stephen E.
Nixon, Richard M.
United States—Politics and government—1945-