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Summary

Size: 5.5 linear feet

Geographic locations: United States

Inclusive dates: 1948-1982

Summary: Photocopies of documents from the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, Kansas, including Eisenhower’s private correspondence, summaries of meetings, minutes of the National Security Council and Cabinet meetings, diary entries by the President and various members of his staff, drafts of speeches, etc. This collection was accumulated by Dr. Ambrose in the course of his research on the Eisenhower administration, which culminated in several books.

Related
Historical/Biographical Note


Following a distinguished military career which culminated in his appointment as commander in chief of the Allied forces in Europe during the Second World War, Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected the thirty-fourth President of the United States. In both his military and political roles, Eisenhower was known as a superb administrator. He was, Ronald Steel commented in Saturday Review, "a man whose genius lay not in strategy . . . but in an ability to organize, delegate authority, and mediate." Townsend Hoopes of the Washington Post Book World called Eisenhower "tough, yet wise; decisive, yet careful; not intellectual, but smart. A natural leader. He understood and used power with considerable finesse, but with an innate appreciation of its limited efficacy. . . . He was, above all, a man of proportion who exerted himself to neutralize the extremes of his time." The eight years of the Eisenhower Administration were a time of economic prosperity, peace, and domestic tranquility.

Eisenhower first came to public attention in 1942 when General George C. Marshall chose him to be commander in chief of the Allied forces fighting Nazi Germany. Until that assignment, Eisenhower had served as a career army officer, rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel in the army's War Plans Division. "There he won the admiration of George Marshall," Steel explained. Marshall, impressed with Eisenhower's ability to moderate differences among subordinates, promoted him over 366 more senior army officers to the important post of overseeing Allied military efforts in Europe.

As commander in chief, Eisenhower was in charge of the joint military operations
of the United States, Britain, and France in their fight against Nazi Germany. Running such a massive effort required the ability to satisfy the varied needs and expectations of foreign allies, domestic politicians, and the military leaders of three countries. Eisenhower, Hoopes remarked, "had a natural gift, unequalled by any of his contemporaries, for diplomatic persuasion." A writer for the Times Literary Supplement maintained that Eisenhower was "a superlative manager of men and an excellent chairman of committees." Gerald Clarke of Time called him "the ideal choice to lead contentious allies." By war's end, Eisenhower had become one of the best known and most popular figures in the United States.

This popularity led the Republican party in 1952 to nominate Eisenhower as its presidential candidate. He won election that year and reelection in 1956, serving a total of eight years as president. Cabell Phillips of the New York Times Book Review reported that Eisenhower was a popular president: "No President of recent times has enjoyed such sustained and uncritical affection." As Stephen E. Ambrose commented in the New Republic, "The 1950s saw peace and prosperity, no riots, relatively high employment, a growing GNP, virtually no inflation, no arms race, no great reforms, no great changes, low taxes, little government regulation of industry and commerce, and a president who was trusted and admired." "Dwight Eisenhower," Steel wrote, "was first in war, peace, and the hearts of his countrymen. . . . His reputation both as General and as President has become nearly as sacrosanct as the flag."

But at the time of his presidency, Eisenhower was often depicted in the press as a lazy and unsophisticated leader who did little because he was unaware of what to do. His casual and unassuming style, along with his reluctance to use governmental power except in extreme cases, also won Eisenhower severe criticism. "Most impartial students of public affairs today," Phillips remarked in 1967, "rate the Eisenhower Presidency rather low on the scale of vigor and accomplishment."

In later years, however, after access to Eisenhower's private papers and diaries had become available, critical evaluation of Eisenhower took a dramatic turn for the better. Eisenhower's casual leadership style, which had made him seem unconcerned about the nation's affairs to some observers, was reevaluated as a shrewd pose designed to keep his adversaries off balance. He was "as shrewd and calculating a mind as has ever won a war or run a country," Clarke observed. "What emerges from the recent studies of Eisenhower," Steel wrote, "is a man of extreme self-assurance, at ease with himself and his convictions. . . . A man who was skillful to the point of cunning."

When compared to the presidents who followed him, Eisenhower also fared well. Ambrose maintained that the initial hostility to Eisenhower came from comparing him to his immediate predecessors, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S Truman. But when compared to "his successors rather than his predecessors," wrote Ambrose, Eisenhower would be placed "in the top 10, if not the top five, of all our presidents." Eisenhower, "to judge from what followed rather than what preceded him, seems a man of decent instincts, incorruptible and unimpressed by titles, . . . and not noticeably afflicted with insecurities," Steel wrote.
Even Eisenhower's critics spoke kindly of him. Writing in the *Saturday Review*, Ernest R. May explained that "admirers and critics of President Eisenhower have held remarkably similar views of him. Both have thought of him as a kindly, good-natured fellow with sound instincts." Charles Burton Marshall of the New Republic found that "it is impossible not to like him. He is thorough, comprehensible, forthright, desirous of everyone's benefit, and mild rather than spiteful. . . . One wonders whether any President ever better epitomized his nation." Ambrose noted that Presidents Roosevelt and Eisenhower held the unique distinction of having "a higher reputation and broader popularity when they left office than when they entered." And Hoopes maintained that "as an endurably popular and trusted American political leader, through thick and thin, [Eisenhower] was without peer in this century."

PERSONAL INFORMATION


WORKS BY EISENHOWER (listed chronologically)


COLLECTIONS

Eisenhower Speaks: Excerpts from the General’s Speeches, with a Biographical Sketch. Edited by H. S. Bagger. Interallied, 1946.


Selected Speeches of Dwight David Eisenhower, Thirty-fourth President of the United States, Selected from Three Principal Periods of His Life: As Supreme Allied


BOOKS ABOUT EISENHOWER BY STEPHEN E. AMBROSE (listed chronologically)


SELECTED BOOKS ABOUT EISENHOWER BY OTHER AUTHORS


**Container List**

Headings listed below are the original headings given to the files by Dr. Ambrose, insofar as they could be determined. Some of the original folders were no longer available when the collection was refoldered in 2000. In cases of doubt, every effort was made to follow the sort of pattern Dr. Ambrose had used.

**Box 1**

153-1, 152-2 n.d.
153-3 October - December 1948.
153-4 January - June 1949.
153-5 July - December 1949.
153-7 July - December 1950.
153-8 January - March 1951.
153-9 April - June 1951.

**Box 2**

153-10 July - September 1951.
153-11, 153-12 October - December 1951.
153-16 April - May 1952.
153-17 "Ann Whitman File Political Campaign Series Except Political Speeches '52".

**Box 3**

153-19 September - December 1952.
153-22 April 1953.
153-23 May 1953.
153-24 June 1953.
153-25 July 1953.
| 153-26 | August 1953. |
| 153-27 | September 1953. |
| 153-28 | October 1953. |

**Box 4**

| 153-29 | November 1953. |
| 153-30 | December 1953. |
| 153-31 | January 1954. |
| 153-32 | February 1954. |
| 153-33 | March 1954. |
| 153-34 | April 1954. |
| 153-35 | May 1954. |
| 153-36 | "Schlesinger." |
| 153-37 | June 1954. |
| 153-38 | July 1954. |

**Box 5**

| 153-40 | September 1954. |
| 153-41 | October 1954. |
| 153-42 | November 1954. |
| 153-43 | December 1954. |
| 153-44 | "Public Papers 1955". |

**Box 6**

153-51  October - December 1955.
153-56  April - June 1956.
153-57  July - September 1956.

**Box 7**

153-64  July - September 1957.
153-65  October - December 1957.

**Box 8**

153-69  April 1958.
153-70  May 1958.
153-72  July 1958.
153-74     September 1958.
153-75     October 1958.

Box 9
153-76     November 1958.
153-77     December 1958.
153-81     April - June 1959.
153-82     July - September 1959.
153-83     October - December 1959.
153-84     January 1960.

Box 10
153-87     April 1960.
153-88     May 1960.
153-95     December 1960.
Box 11

153-100 January - June 1963.

Index Terms

Ambrose, Stephen E.
Eisenhower, Dwight D.