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PAPERS OF NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN



Neville Chamberlain (1869-1940) remains the best-known of the Chamberlain family due to his controversial policy of "appeasement" towards Hitler. *The Papers of Neville Chamberlain* contain political papers documenting his policies as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Prime Minister, but also highlight his personal correspondence with his family. These provide insight into the intentions behind his policies, his concerns at the development of the Second World War, as well as letters covering his life together with his wife Annie and his sisters, particularly Hilda and Ida. The correspondence of his wife with his biographer and the handling of his estates following his death can be found in this collection as well.

Date Range: 1869-1940

Content: 115,526 images

Source Library: University of Birmingham Library

Detailed Description:

For nearly three quarters of a century, one member or other of the Chamberlain family stood at the centre of affairs in Great Britain; Neville Chamberlain remains the best known in government due to his controversial policy of "appeasement", which he pursued as Prime Minister in an attempt to keep Europe from plunging into war. His letters and papers provide the best means of appreciating his motives in attempting to reach an understanding with Hitler. This collection not only contains evidence of his thoughts and intentions behind his policies in the Second World War, but of the gratitude with which that attempt was initially greeted around the world.

His career is often overshadowed by the notoriety of appeasement: he was a good mayor of Birmingham; an innovative party organiser at both the local and national level; Britain's first, and one of the ablest, Ministers of Health; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer over Britain's partial recovery from the Depression in 1929 and 1930. His papers include diaries, letters from his constituents, records of the business transacted in the succession of offices which he held and correspondences with local and national colleagues, including Leo Amery and Winston Churchill.

Neville Chamberlain was closest to his sisters, expressed through the personal family papers encompassed within this collection. His sisters followed his career with keen, but not uncritical, sympathy. He sought to express himself in letters with the kind of freedom we have come to associate with the telephone. These personal letters provide much more insight into Neville Chamberlain as they contain more than simply the letters of a famous man. As a result, his papers are rich in materials for women's history and family history as they are for understanding the politics.

With these and a host of other visual and printed materials, *The Papers of Neville Chamberlain* constitute one of the most important sets of primary sources on British life and politics in the first half of the twentieth century.

Key documents found in this collection:

- Family letters, particularly with his wife and two sisters, Ida and Hilda
- Letters and papers about Neville Chamberlain's forebears, including the Kenrick family of his mother
- Journals of his travels through Europe, Asia, Africa and North America, discussing the public policies and business practices he encountered
- Diaries of the ill-fated Bahamas venture and his entire political career
- Drafts and final copies of a number of his political speeches and broadcasts
- Pre-war papers dealing with the Tariff Commission and the canal system which drew traffic to Birmingham
- Papers of Neville Chamberlain as the Director General of National Service, including strained correspondence with Lloyd George
- Letters on internal intrigues of the Conservative party in the early 1930s
- Papers outlining the meetings with Hitler at Berchtesgaden, on the early months of the resumed war, on his painstaking preparation for the debate that precipitated his fall as Prime Minister and on his subsequent responsibilities as Lord President
- Published articles by, about, or of interest to Neville Chamberlain
- Papers of Mrs Neville Chamberlain following her husband's death
- Photographs, including some of his trips to meet Mussolini and then Hitler in 1938