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## PAPERS OF SIR AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN

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Sir Austen Chamberlain (1863-1937) was the ablest Foreign Secretary of the interwar period, earning the Nobel Peace Prize for the signing of the Locarno Treaties in 1925. As a career politician, he held a variety of government offices, and *The Papers of Sir Austen Chamberlain* contains political papers that variously document his policies as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the House of Commons. These provide insight into the intentions behind his policies, the development of foreign affairs for both the First and Second World Wars, and his role in the wartime coalition government. The papers also include personal correspondence with his family, including his sister and wife, and highlight his close friendship with his stepmother, Mary Endicott.

**Date Range:** 1863-1937

**Content:** 110,747 images

**Source Library:** University of Birmingham Library

### **Detailed Description:**

Austen Chamberlain held ministerial office for 23 years between 1895 and 1931, serving much longer in government than both his father and brother. He served at the Admiralty at the beginning and end of that period; as Chancellor of the Exchequer before and after the First World War; as Secretary of India during the War; in the War Cabinet towards its end; and as Foreign Secretary in the 1920s. He also held office as leader of the Conservative Party in the House of Commons from 1921 to 1922, when the Conservatives formed the largest component in the coalition led by Lloyd George.

The significance of these papers is heightened by the preparation Austen was given for the world of a statesman: Joseph and Neville were both trained for careers in business; Austen was the only one groomed for government. He was sent to Cambridge and then to Paris and Berlin for further education before entering the House of Commons at 29. He dedicated himself to public service and was at his political and diplomatic best in foreign affairs.

He proved to be Britain's ablest and longest-serving Foreign Secretary between the First and Second World Wars and he was honoured for the signing of the Locarno Treaties in 1925

with both a Knighthood of the Garter and the Nobel Peace Prize. His papers reflect how his interest in the broad reaches and military dimensions of international diplomacy extended back long before he held any government office.

Austen Chamberlain was the family historian and through his papers the Chamberlains can be traced from the 18th century in Wiltshire and on Milk Street in the city of London. A lot of family correspondence can be found in his papers, involving those of his siblings and wife. More of this can be found in his papers than elsewhere mainly because they include the vast correspondence of his father's third wife, Mary Endicott, a well-connected American of Austen's age who became his lifelong friend.

Key documents found in this collection include:

- Letters between Austen and his family
- thousands of letters of Mary Endicott Chamberlain to both her family in the UK and the USA
- Letters between Austen and his family
  - 1358 letters from Austen to his step-mother, Mary, forming the most important correspondence covering his whole lifetime in politics
  - Austen's correspondence with his family, including his sisters and his wife, Ivy Dundas
- Collection of letters on drawing room etiquette when Mary had to make her way among the highest echelons of British and European society
- Letters from Lady Dorothy Nevill, the witty hostess who straddled the social boundary between Tories and Radicals at the turn of the century
- Collected documents for *Notes on the Families of Chamberlain and Harben*, a privately printed book by Austen Chamberlain
- Travel diaries and datebooks
- Earliest political papers from 1886, when he first contemplated entering Parliament, to 1911
  - Includes his troubled years as Chancellor of the Exchequer after his father's resignation from the Unionist government
- Assortment of papers and correspondence from 1902 - 1911 on the military estimates, reform of the army and tariff reform
- Papers from the Committee of Imperial Defence, often relating to India, during the war and post-war coalition ministries
- Congratulations, including the Nobel Peace Prize, in response to his achievement at Locarno