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Karl L. Rankin Papers, 1916-1973: Finding Aid

Summary Information

Call number:	MC110
Location:	Princeton University Library. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library. Public Policy Papers. 65 Olden Street Princeton, New Jersey 08540 USA
Size:	12.5 linear feet (13 archival boxes, 5 oversize boxes)
Language(s) of material:	English.
Abstract:	The Karl L. Rankin Papers consist of correspondence, writings, memoranda, diaries, scrapbooks, and photo albums kept by Mr. Rankin which span his lifetime and career as an ambassador.

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Biography of Karl Lott Rankin

Karl Lott Rankin was born on September 4, 1898 in Manitowc, Wisconsin to Emmet Woollen and Alberta Rankin. He grew up and lived in Topeka, Kansas before attending the California Institute of Technology from 1917-1919. In the 1920-1921 academic year, Rankin studied at the Federal Polytechnic Institute in Zurich. He received his degree in civil engineering from Princeton University in 1922.

His studies were interrupted by active duty in the U.S. Navy during World War I. Following his Princeton graduation, Rankin became a field engineer in Turkey and supervised construction for Near East Relief in the U.S.S.R. (Caucasus region) between 1922 and 1925. After this, he returned to the United States to run a New Jersey real estate company. This career was short-lived, however, and, in 1927, he enlisted in the Foreign Commerce Service. He served in Prague (1929), Athens (1932), Tirana (1932), Albania, and Brussels (1939). By 1940, he achieved the rank of consul while serving in Belgrade. In 1941, he was interned by the Japanese in Manila while en route to an assignment in Egypt. He held subsequent assignments in Athens (1944-1945, 1947-1949) and Belgrade (1945-1946), Vienna (1946-1947), Canton (1949), Hong Kong (1949), and Taipei (1950-1953). He was an ambassador to China from 1953-1957 and to Yugoslavia from 1958-1961. He officially retired in 1961, and in 1964, he wrote a book, *China Assignment* which discusses his years in Taiwan.

Rankin's first wife, Pauline Jordan (they were married in 1925) died in 1976. In 1978, Rankin married Ruth Thompson Garcelon. Rankin died on January 15, 1991 at the age of 92.

Description

This collection contains mostly correspondence and memoranda between Rankin and other Government officials. There exist some writings, mostly official reports. A list of correspondents and subjects identified by year follows the container listing.

Series 1: Diaries, 1931-1953

These diaries are just basic reminders about what events occurred on a given day. There exist few details about conversations and meetings. Rankin probably used his diaries to remember important events about a given day. He apparently stopped writing diaries after 1953.

Series 2: Personal Records, 1917-1958

This folder contains personal information regarding Rankin's academic and employment records. One can find information such as his employment salary, academic transcripts, transfer records, and certificates of service. Also, one can see Rankin's identification cards, passports, visas, and unusual personal objects (such as meal cards) here.

Series 3: Correspondence, 1916-1988

This series is a collection of Rankin's correspondence with other government officials, friends, and family. It covers a broad range of topics, from business schedules to official requests and thank you notes. See the index,

pp.# 13-25, for a list of names and subjects by date for this series.

Series 4: Writings, 1921-1984

This series is composed mostly of official reports created by Rankin regarding the situation in a given region. In this section one can also find some of his writing (poetry, mostly) during his Philippine imprisonment during the 1940s. See the index, pp.# 13-25, for a list of names and subjects by date for this series.

Series 5: Clipping Files, 1927-1937

This section contains clippings about Czechoslovakia and Greece during the later 1920s and earlier 1930s. Rankin was interested in gaining knowledge on the economic aspects of these regions in order to increase his effectiveness as consul. Most papers here have multiple dates and/or scribbles which make them difficult to classify chronologically.

Series 6: Scrapbooks, 1941-1973

Rankin or his staff collected several scrapbooks of newspaper clippings about important events that involved him either directly or indirectly. These volumes have been disbound and reformatted on acid free paper. Generally, the scrapbooks are grouped by region(s).

Series 7: Photograph albums, 1920-1965

Rankin kept photos of himself, family, friends, and others in photograph albums. He also has photos of certain regions during wartime, as evidenced in his pictures of South Korea. Like the scrapbooks, they lack organization for the most part. Estimates have been made regarding the time frames of these albums when possible.

Arrangement

Organized into the following series:

- Series 1: Diaries, 1931-1953
- Series 2: Personal Records, 1917-1958
- Series 3: Correspondence, 1916-1988
- Series 4: Writings, 1921-1984
- Series 5: Clipping Files, 1927-1937
- Series 6: Scrapbooks, 1941-1973
- Series 7: Photograph albums, 1920-1965

Access and Use

Access

Collection is open for research use.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information

Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. Permission to publish materials from the collection must be requested from the Curator of the Public Policy Papers. Researchers are responsible for determining any copyright questions.

Acquisition and Appraisal

Provenance and Acquisition

Ambassador Rankin deposited his papers in the Princeton Library in 1973 and then formally donated them in 1977.

Related Materials

Related Publications

Rankin, Karl Lott, *China Assignment* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964)

Processing and Other Information

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Karl L. Rankin Papers, Box and Folder Number; Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Edward J. Jaramillo (Princeton Class of 1996) in 1993. Finding aid written by Edward J. Jaramillo (Princeton Class of 1996) in 1993.

Encoding

Machine-readable finding aid encoded in EAD 2002 by Techbooks and Cristela García-Spitz on September 20, 2006.

Descriptive Rules Used

Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*.

Subject Headings

These materials have been indexed in the [Princeton University Library online catalog](#) using the following terms. Those seeking related materials should search under these terms.

- Near East Relief (Organization).
- United States. Foreign Service -- 20th century.
- Ambassadors -- United States -- 20th century.
- Commercial attaches -- United States -- 20th century.
- Communism -- China.
- Diplomatic and consular service -- United States -- 20th century.
- China -- Photographs.
- China -- Foreign relations -- United States -- 20th century.
- Greece -- Photographs.
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- Middle East -- Politics and government -- 20th century.
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Contents List

Series 1: Diaries, 1931-1953

Series Description

These diaries are just basic reminders about what events occurred on a given day. There exist few details about conversations and meetings. Rankin probably used his diaries to remember important events about a given day. He apparently stopped writing diaries after 1953.

Series Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>BOX</u>	<u>FOLDER</u>
1931-1935	1	1
1936-1946	1	2
1937,1940	1	3
1947-1949	1	4
1951-1953	1	5

Series 2: Personal Records, 1917-1958

Series Description

This folder contains personal information regarding Rankin's academic and employment records. One can find information such as his employment salary, academic transcripts, transfer records, and certificates of service. Also, one can see Rankin's identification cards, passports, visas, and unusual personal objects (such as meal cards) here.

Series Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>BOX</u>	<u>FOLDER</u>
1916-1958	1	6

Series 3: Correspondence, 1916-1988 ... (Continued)**Series 3: Correspondence, 1916-1988****Series Description**

This series is a collection of Rankin's correspondence with other government officials, friends, and family. It covers a broad range of topics, from business schedules to official requests and thank you notes. See the index, pp.# 13-25, for a list of names and subjects by date for this series.

Series Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

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1929	1	19
1930	1	20
1931	2	1
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1933	2	3

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Series 3: Correspondence, 1916-1988 ... (Continued)

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1949 Mar - 1949 Aug	4	4
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1953 Jan - 1953 Apr	5	7
1953 May - 1953 Sep	6	1
1953 Oct - 1953 Dec	6	2
1954 Jan - 1954 Mar	6	3
1954 Apr - 1954 Jul	6	4
1954 Aug - 1954 Sep	6	5
1954 Oct - 1954 Dec	6	6
1955 Jan - 1955 Mar	7	1
1955 Apr - 1955 Jun	7	2
1955 Jul - 1955 Oct	7	3
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1956 Jan - 1956 Mar	7	5
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Series 3: Correspondence, 1916-1988 ... (Continued)

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1957 Jan - 1956 Mar	8	3
1957 Apr - 1956 May	8	4
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1957 Aug - 1957 Nov	8	6
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1958 Jan - 1958 Mar	9	1
1958 Apr - 1958 Dec	9	2
1959 Jan - 1959 Jun	9	3
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1960 Jan - 1960 Jul	9	5
1960 Aug - 1960 Dec	9	6
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Series 3: Correspondence, 1916-1988 ... (Continued)

1972	10	12
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Series 4: Writings, 1921-1984

Series Description

This series is composed mostly of official reports created by Rankin regarding the situation in a given region. In this section one can also find some of his writing (poetry, mostly) during his Philippine imprisonment during the 1940s. See the index, pp.# 13-25, for a list of names and subjects by date for this series.

Series Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>BOX</u>	<u>FOLDER</u>
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Series 5: Clipping Files, 1927-1937

Series Description

Series 5: Clipping Files, 1927-1937 ... (Continued)

This section contains clippings about Czechoslovakia and Greece during the later 1920s and earlier 1930s. Rankin was interested in gaining knowledge on the economic aspects of these regions in order to increase his effectiveness as consul. Most papers here have multiple dates and/or scribbles which make them difficult to classify chronologically.

Series Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>BOX</u>	<u>FOLDER</u>
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Greece, 1936	12	10
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Series 6: Scrapbooks, 1941-1973

Series Description

Rankin or his staff collected several scrapbooks of newspaper clippings about important events that involved him either directly or indirectly. These volumes have been disbound and reformatted on acid free paper. Generally, the scrapbooks are grouped by region(s).

Series Arrangement

Loosely arranged chronologically and then by country.

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>BOX</u>	<u>FOLDER</u>
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Series 6: Scrapbooks, 1941-1973 ... (Continued)

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Greece (mostly), 1944-1968	13	2
Hong Kong, China (Taiwan), 1949-1950	13	3
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Series 7: Photograph Albums, 1920-1965**Series Description**

Rankin kept photos of himself, family, friends, and others in photograph albums. He also has photos of certain regions during wartime, as evidenced in his pictures of South Korea. Like the scrapbooks, they lack organization for the most part. Estimates have been made regarding the time frames of these albums when possible.

Series Arrangement

Loosely arranged chronologically and/or by country.

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Series 7: Photograph Albums, 1920-1965 ... (Continued)

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