



National Archives and Records Administration

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State Department and Foreign Service Personnel: Appointment Records, 1797–1968

Congress established the Department of State on July 21, 1789, to oversee the international relations of the United States as well as certain domestic duties such as management of the U.S. Mint, keeper of the Great Seal of the United States, and the taking of the Federal census. Records relating to State Department personnel, including the Diplomatic, Consular, and Foreign Services, are part of Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State.

Application and Recommendation Case Files, 1797–1924

Applications and recommendations for office generally contain letters from applicants for positions in the State Department and from persons recommending them for positions. The records are arranged roughly by Presidential administration and then alphabetically by the name of the applicant. Applications and recommendations received during the Washington administration (1789–1796) are at the Library of Congress. An individual may have a file in more than one administration. For 1901–1924, there are similar case files for appointments to the U.S. Foreign Service.

Microfilmed Files

The Descriptive Pamphlet (DP) for each publication includes a list of names in the files.

___M406, *Letters of Application and Recommendation during the Administration of John Adams, 1797–1801.* 3 rolls. DP.

___M418, *Letters of Application and Recommendation during the Administration of Thomas Jefferson, 1801–1809.* 12 rolls. DP.

___M438, *Letters of Application and Recommendation during the Administration of James Madison, 1809–1817.* 8 rolls. DP.

___M439, *Letters of Application and Recommendation during the Administration of James Monroe, 1817–1825.* 19 rolls. DP.

___M531, *Letters of Application and Recommendation during the Administration of John Quincy Adams, 1825–1829.* 8 rolls. DP.

___M639, *Letters of Application and Recommendation during the Administration of Andrew Jackson, 1829–1837.* 27 rolls. DP.

___M687, *Letters of Application and Recommendation during the Administrations of Martin Van Buren, William Henry Harrison, and John Tyler, 1837–1845.* 35 rolls. DP.

___M873, *Letters of Application and Recommendation during the Administrations of James Polk, Zachary Taylor, and Millard Fillmore, 1845–1853.* 98 rolls. DP.

___M967, *Letters of Application and Recommendation during the Administrations of Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan, 1853–1861*. 50 rolls. DP.

___M650, *Letters of Application and Recommendation during the Administrations of Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson, 1861–1869*. 53 rolls. DP.

___M968, *Letters of Application and Recommendation during the Administration of Ulysses S. Grant, 1869–1877*.

Textual Records

___**Applications and Recommendations for Public Office, 1797–1901** (I-15, Entry 760).

The records are arranged chronologically by period, then alphabetically by the name of the applicant. Records available only in textual format include the following administrations:

- Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield, and Chester A. Arthur (1877–1885), 84 boxes
- Grover Cleveland and Benjamin Harrison (1885–1893), 139 boxes
- Grover Cleveland (1893–1897), 96 boxes
- William McKinley (1897–1901), 123 boxes

___**Applications and Recommendations for Appointment to the Foreign Service, 1901–1924** (I-15 Entry 764). Arranged alphabetically by name of the applicant, the folders may contain letters of application and recommendation, birth certificates, statements of personal history, notices of examination, newspaper clippings, photographs, and other pertinent papers.

Card Records

Beginning in 1789, the Secretary of State prepared the civil commissions of U.S. officials appointed by the President, affixed the Great Seal to such documents, and kept records for such appointments. For the period 1776–1968 there are record cards for each person appointed and commissioned, showing the dates of appointment and type of position or Foreign Service post.

___**Card Record of Appointments Made from 1776 to 1968** (I-15 Entry 798). The cards are arranged alphabetically by name of appointee, including officers and clerks in the State Department and Foreign Service.

___**Service Record Cards, 1890–1939** (I-15 Entry 798.1).

Arranged alphabetically by surname. The cards include birth dates, appointment dates, posts applied for, assignment and promotion history, pay changes, diplomatic titles, and separation dates.

For more information, see the following reference reports:

- *State Department and Foreign Service Personnel: Personnel Lists and Official Personnel Files (OPFs), 1778–1990*
- *Employees of the Department of State in the Official Register of the United States, 1817–1925*

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