

# Guide to the Sidney Edward Mezes Papers

MS 657



compiled by N. X. Rizopoulos, with the assistance of Anne Willard

April 1973

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
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**CALL NUMBER:** MS 657

**CREATOR:** Mezes, Sidney Edward, 1863-1931

**TITLE:** Sidney Edward Mezes papers

**DATES:** 1918-1931

**BULK DATES:** 1918-1919

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 0.75 linear feet (2 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Correspondence of Sidney Mezes relating to his work with "The Inquiry" and the American Commission to Negotiate Peace in Paris at the end of World War I. Also included are a group of miscellaneous memoranda and notes.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0657>

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## Requesting Instructions

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Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box  
f. folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Conditions Governing Use

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## Preferred Citation

Sidney Edward Mezes Papers (MS 657). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

Sidney Edward Mezes, one of the foremost educational statesmen of his day, was born in 1863 and received his academic training at the University of California (B. S., 1884) and Harvard (B. A., 1890; M. A., 1891; Ph. D., 1893). He began his teaching career as professor of philosophy at the University of Texas,<sup>1</sup> where he was subsequently appointed Dean of Faculty (1902-1908) and University President (1908-1914). In 1914 Mezes was elected President of the College of the City of New York, a post he held for thirteen years; he was forced to retire in 1927 because of failing health and died in 1931. While at Texas Mezes had married Annie Hunter, who was the sister of Colonel E. M. House's wife; this event inaugurated a long and intimate relationship - and one which, at a critical moment in American history, produced wider political repercussions.

When in the fall of 1917 President Wilson asked Colonel House to begin assembling in New York a group of experts in order to "collect and collate data on geographical, ethnological, historical, economic and political problems of Europe and other areas of the world in preparation for the peace conference which should follow World War I,"<sup>2</sup> the latter chose Mezes to act as his chief lieutenant and immediately named him to the post of Director of The Inquiry, as this group came to be known. In retrospect, despite Mezes' and House's mutual trust and affection, this proved to be an unfortunate decision.

In the first place, despite the administrative experience which he had gained at Texas and CCNY, Mezes proved surprisingly ineffective both in supervising and coordinating the activities of his assistants and in resolving personality problems that arose amongst his staff. Quite simply Mezes did not run a "tight ship." Moreover he inspired little confidence either at the White House or at the Department of State - The Inquiry's main points of contact with the Government. Second, despite his well-deserved reputation as an academic philosopher, Mezes was totally ill-equipped in the field of international relations - political, economic, or diplomatic.<sup>3</sup> This situation was not calculated to endear him either to such "Young Turks" as Walter Lippmann (The Inquiry's first executive secretary, who - along with many others - questioned the suitability of Mezes' appointment from the very beginning, seeing it essentially as yet another example of House's tendency to surround himself with individuals unquestionably loyal to him but not possessing professional credentials commensurate with the positions of power which they exercised within the circle of special advisers attached to the Colonel), or to such bona fide experts as Isaiah Bowman, James Shotwell, and David Hunter Miller. Third, Mezes proved surprisingly indolent and uninspired in attending to even the most routine of tasks<sup>4</sup> - so much so that Secretary Lansing and Colonel House himself were forced to intervene (in the summer and fall of 1918) to prevent en masse resignations from some of the most important members of The Inquiry's staff.<sup>5</sup>

Be that as it may, in name at least, Mezes remained Director of The Inquiry in New York, and subsequently he became its highest paid administrative officer in Paris, when - as part of the "Division of Territorial, Economic and Political Intelligence" of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace - the nucleus of The Inquiry accompanied President Wilson to the French capital. While in Paris Mezes served as American representative on the Central Committee on Territorial Questions appointed by the Supreme Council. Although his influence within the American Commission per se was nowhere near as great as that of

Bowman, he most certainly continued to see a good deal of Colonel House - and (in the process) to annoy both inveterate "Housophobes" like Admiral Grayson and Mrs. Wilson and true professionals such as Douglas Johnson and W. L. Westermann.<sup>6</sup>

On the whole, then, Mezes' two-year involvement with The Inquiry emerges as the least satisfactory chapter of an otherwise distinguished public career.<sup>7</sup> Successful or not, it retains a good deal of interest for all students of American participation in the World War and the Peace Conference, while providing a small ray of light into the still unresolved mystery of the House-Wilson contretemps.

Unfortunately, the bulk of Mezes' private papers were either lost or destroyed after his death.<sup>8</sup> There remain today the following three sets of papers: (a) two boxes of Peace Conference material which are deposited at the Columbia University Library; (b) two incomplete (but valuable) collections of personal letters exchanged between Mezes and House and Mezes and Charles Seymour - which are currently included in the General Correspondence series of the "Papers of Colonel E. M. House" and the "Charles Seymour Papers" respectively; and (c) the small group of Mezes Papers which are described below: these were assembled by Charles Seymour when he served as the first curator of the "House Collection."

<sup>1</sup> Mezes was the author of *The Conception of God* (1897), and of *Ethics, Descriptive and Explanatory* (1901). <sup>2</sup> See Stephen Helton, "Introduction," *Records of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace* (Washington: 1955; National Archives Preliminary Inventory No. 89). <sup>3</sup> Lawrence Gelfand discusses these problems at length in *The Inquiry: American Preparations for Peace, 1917-1919* (New Haven: 1963). <sup>4</sup> See, above all, Appendix VI in Gelfand, op. cit. <sup>5</sup> By October Bowman, in particular, was at the end of his tether. See Appendix VII, in Gelfand, op. cit. <sup>6</sup> The latter, in particular, resented Mezes' secretive meddling and ill-informed pronouncements in the heated debates which divided the members of the American Commission in the spring of 1919 over such issues as Italy's demands on Fiume and the Tirol and Venizelos' claims in western Asia Minor. <sup>7</sup> Mezes himself glossed over it, all too briefly, in the short chapter on The Inquiry which he contributed to House's and Seymour's *What Really Happened in Paris* (1921). <sup>8</sup> On the other hand, many of Mezes' official papers are available along with the official Inquiry records, which form part of Record Group 256 ("Records of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace") at the National Archives. Copies of some of these documents can also be found in the Yale University Library's smaller collection of Inquiry Papers (Manuscript Group Number 8).

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## Scope and Contents

Most of the correspondence was written during the Peace Conference period. It is mainly of several routine kinds: requests for employment, covering letters (with most enclosures missing), staff memoranda about administrative matters, summaries of documents, and exchanges of courtesies. There are also letters and memoranda on policy questions by Tasker Bliss (Mezes' draft "Agreement for an Association of Nations"), B. H. Carroll (Fiume), Stanley K. Hornbeck (China), Douglas W. Johnson (Fiume), R. H. Lord (Rumania), Charles McCarthy (Ireland), Harold Nicolson (Greece), Robert E. Speer (the Assyrians), W. L. Westermann (Turkey), and Abraham D. Yuseff (the Assyrians). A 1912 letter by Franklin K. Lane gives his impression of Colonel House. Mezes' letters to George S. Viereck in 1931 recall the last eighteen months of Wilson's second term.

The Sidney E. Mezes Papers are divided into two series: (I) General Correspondence. (1 box) [arranged alphabetically by correspondent] and (II) Miscellaneous Memoranda and Notes (1919). (1 box) [arranged alphabetically by topic].

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## Arrangement

Arranged in two series: I. Correspondence. II. Miscellaneous Memoranda and Notes.

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## Collection Contents

### Series I: Correspondence

Correspondence is arranged alphabetically; number in parentheses indicates the number of items.

b. 1, f. 1	Aharoman [?], A. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 2	Albert, Irving (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 3	Anderson, Frank M. (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 4	Babcock, Earl B. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 5	Baldwin, Samuel (1)	1918
b. 1, f. 6	Baskerville, Charles (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 7	Benson, W. S. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 8	Bernays, Edward L. (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 9	Bernhoft, H. A. (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 10	Bliss, Tasker (2)	1918-1919
b. 1, f. 11	Bonsal, Stephen (3)	1919
b. 1, f. 12	Borgeant, Charles (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 13	Bourchier, J. D. (3)	1919
b. 1, f. 14	Bowman, Isaiah (9)	1918-1919
b. 1, f. 15	Brown, C. N. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 16	Cable, P. L. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 17	Cardashian, Vahan (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 18	Carroll, B. H. (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 19	Churchill, M. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 20	Close, Gilbert F. (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 21	Cobb, B. B. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 22	Condon, R. E. (3)	1919
b. 1, f. 23	Creel, George (1)	1918
b. 1, f. 24	D'Estournelles de Constant, Baron (3)	1919
b. 1, f. 25	Dixon, R. B. (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 26	Dolleans, Edouard (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 27	Dougherty, J. H. Jr. (1)	1918

b. 1, f. 28	Dresel, E. L. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 29	Farabee, W. C. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 30	Gary, Hampson (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 31	Ginn, A. S. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 32	Goyard, J. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 33	Grew, Joseph (40)	1918-1919
b. 1, f. 34	Hankey, M. P. A. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 35	Harrison, Leland (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 36	Haskins, C. H. (3)	1919
b. 1, f. 37	Headlam-Morley, J. W. (3)	1919
b. 1, f. 38	Hecht, J. S. (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 39	Hornbeck, S. K. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 40	Irwin, Will (1)	1918
b. 1, f. 41	Jackson, A. V. W. (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 42	Jacobsen, J. C. (1)	1918
b. 1, f. 43	Jefferson, Mark (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 44	Johnson, Douglas (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 45	Jonescu, Take (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 46	Judelsohn, M. (4)	1918-1919
b. 1, f. 47	Judson, H. P. (7)	1919
b. 1, f. 48	Kerner, R. J. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 49	Kisch, F. H. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 50	Lane, F. K. (1)	1912
b. 1, f. 51	Lansing, Robert (6)	1918-1919
b. 1, f. 52	Lindsay, S. M. (1)	1923
b. 1, f. 53	Lord, R. H. (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 54	Lybyer, A. H. (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 55	McCarthy, Charles (10)	1918-1919
b. 1, f. 56	McFarland, B. H. (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 57	McNeir, _____ (1)	1919

b. 1, f. 58	Miller, David Hunter (6)	1919
b. 1, f. 59	de Montille, _____ (3)	1919
b. 1, f. 60	Moon, Parker T. (5)	1918
b. 1, f. 61	Montgomery, George R. (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 62	Morgan, B. M. (1)	1918
b. 1, f. 63	Moseley, P. H. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 64	Newton, R. J. (1)	1916
b. 1, f. 65	Newton, Whitney (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 66	Nicolson, Harold (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 67	Pfeiffer, C. G. (1)	1926
b. 1, f. 68	Pratt, J. R. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 69	Rosky, A. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 70	Salvago-Raggi, Marquis (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 71	Seitz, Horace G. (4)	1918-1919
b. 1, f. 72	Scott, E. J. (1)	1918
b. 1, f. 73	Shimmon, Paul (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 74	Shotwell, James T. (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 75	Speer, Robert E. (4)	1919
b. 1, f. 76	Storck, John (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 77	Tardieu, André (3)	1919
b. 1, f. 78	Tomitch, D. (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 79	Venizelos, E. K. (5)	1919
b. 1, f. 80	Vesnitch, M. R. (3)	1919
b. 1, f. 86	Westermann, W. L. (5)	1919
b. 1, f. 81	Vickrey, C. V. (2)	1918-1919
b. 1, f. 82	Viereck, G. S. (2)	1931
b. 1, f. 83	Vilaras, G. B. (2)	1919
b. 1, f. 84	Wald, L. D. (3)	1917
b. 1, f. 85	Washburn, Robert M. (2)	1930
b. 1, f. 87	White, Henry (2)	1919



b. 1, f. 88	Whitehouse, Remsen (25)	1919
b. 1, f. 89	Wilson, Woodrow (4)	1919
b. 1, f. 90	Winthrop, H. R. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 91	Wynne, E. C. (7)	1919
b. 1, f. 92	Young, A. A. (1)	1919
b. 1, f. 93	Yuseff, A. D. (4)	1918-1919
b. 1, f. 94	Miscellaneous (3)	1919, 1920, no year

## Series II: Miscellaneous Memoranda and Notes, 1919

b. 2, f. 1	Dalmatia: Memoranda from D. H. Miller, W. E. Lunt, C. W. Mendell to Mezes	(1919 March-Apr)
b. 2, f. 2	Dantzig: Memoranda from Mezes to President Wilson	(1919 March-Apr)
b. 2, f. 3	France: Colonial Questions ["L'Afrique française," January - March 1918 (abstracts)]	
b. 2, f. 4	Greece: Aspirations in Smyrna. Memoranda by W. L. Westermann and C. H. Mason	(1919 Jan)
b. 2, f. 5	Lithuania: Polish Aggression in. Memorandum by R. J. Caldwell	(1919 May)
b. 2, f. 6	Maestricht: Memorandum from its representatives in Dutch Limburg	Undated
b. 2, f. 7	Persia: Memorandum on confidential volume on Persia, by H. P. Judson	(1919 Jan)
b. 2, f. 8	Rumania: Memoranda [and map] on future boundaries by Charles Seymour and others	(1919 Feb)
b. 2, f. 9	Miscellaneous [printed material]	

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## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### Subjects

Diplomats  
World War, 1914-1918

### Corporate Body

Paris Peace Conference. United States  
Territorial Section (1919-1920. United States  
Territorial Section) -- 1919-1920

### Geographic Names

United States -- Foreign relations

### Names

Baskerville, Charles, 1870-1922  
Bernays, Edward L., 1891-1995  
Bliss, Tasker Howard, 1853-1930  
Bonsal, Stephen, 1865-1951  
Bowman, Isaiah, 1878-1950  
Close, Gilbert F., 1881-1952  
Creel, George, 1876-1953  
Grew, Joseph C. (Joseph Clark), 1880-1965  
Hankey, Maurice Pascal Alers Hankey, Baron,  
1877-1963  
Haskins, Charles Homer, 1870-1937  
Hornbeck, Stanley Kuhl, 1883-1966  
Irwin, Will, 1873-1948  
Jefferson, Mark, 1863-1949  
Lane, Franklin K.  
Lansing, Robert, 1864-1928  
Lord, Robert Howard, 1885-1954  
Lybyer, Albert Howe, 1876-1949  
Mezes, Sidney Edward, 1863-1931  
Miller, David Hunter, 1875-1961  
Montgomery, George Redington, 1870-1945  
Moon, Parker Thomas, 1892-1936  
Nicolson, Harold, 1886-1968  
Shotwell, James T., 1874-1965  
Tardieu, André, 1876-1945  
Venizelos, Eleutherios, 1864-1936  
Viereck, George Sylvester, 1884-1962  
Wald, Lillian D., 1867-1940  
Westermann, William Linn, 1873-1954  
White, Henry, 1850-1927  
Wilson, Woodrow, 1856-1924