

Collection #
M 0740
BV 3296–3301
OMB 0079

**WALTER QUINTIN GRESHAM
COLLECTION, 1858–1946 (BULK 1858–1935)**

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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
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Indiana Historical Society
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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 14 manuscript boxes, 6 bound volumes, 1 oversize box

COLLECTION
DATES: Inclusive, 1858–1946; bulk, 1858–1935

PROVENANCE: William A. Urban, 4012 Young Hill Lane S.E., Port Orchard,
Washington 98366, 21 April 1999

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: Noble Butler Papers (M 0009); Charles Calhoun, *Gilded Age
Cato: The Life of Walter Q. Gresham* (E 664 .G82 C34 1987);
Matilda Gresham, *Life of Walter Q. Gresham* (E664 .G82 G8
1919)

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1999.0329

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Walter Quintin Gresham (1832–95), a judge, politician, and soldier, was born in Lanesville, Harrison County, Indiana. After attending Indiana University for one year, he began practicing law in Corydon, Harrison County, Indiana, in 1854. In 1856 he married Matilda McGrain and they produced two children. After the collapse of the Whig and Know Nothing Parties, Gresham joined the newly formed Republican Party. In 1860 he was elected to the Indiana Legislature and served one term. While serving as a state representative he frequently clashed with Governor Morton over the system of patronage. In 1862 Gresham enlisted in the 38th Indiana Regiment and was elected captain by the men. The following year he was promoted to lieutenant colonel and later to colonel of the 53rd Indiana. Gresham served in Mississippi and Georgia and was involved in the Vicksburg and Atlanta campaigns. He was soon promoted again, this time to brigadier general of the 53rd but was injured in the leg near Atlanta in 1864. Gresham never completely recovered from his wound and returned to Indiana where he was named brevet major general in 1865. After the war, Gresham returned to legal practice in New Albany, Floyd County, Indiana. Gresham made two unsuccessful bids for the U. S. Congress in 1866 and 1868. In 1869 President Grant appointed him district judge for Indiana. Gresham briefly served as Postmaster General and Secretary of the Treasury in 1883–84 before being name circuit judge for Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana, with headquarters in Chicago.

Throughout his political career, Gresham was at odds with the leaders of the Indiana Republican Party, Oliver Morton and his successor, Benjamin Harrison. In 1884 he was mentioned as a possible presidential candidate, and in 1888 he mounted a serious campaign, finishing second on the first ballot of the convention. Gresham severed his ties with the Republican Party over his opposition to the McKinley Tariff of 1890. He was urged to run on the Populist Party ticket in the 1892 presidential campaign, but after much deliberation, he declined and supported Grover Cleveland in his successful 1892 campaign. Cleveland rewarded Gresham's support by naming him secretary of state in 1893. Gresham opposed American imperialism and the annexation of Hawaii. He died in office in 1895.

Sources: *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 4, pp.607–609.
Encyclopedia of Indianapolis, pp. 645–646.
Centennial History of the Indiana General Assembly, vol. 1, p. 154.

Otto Gresham (ca. 1858–1946), the son of Walter Q. Gresham, was born in Corydon, Harrison County, Indiana. He was a Wabash College graduate and practiced law for fifty years in Illinois and Indiana, specializing in patent law.

Source: Indiana Biography Series (Indiana State Library), vol. 30, p. 31.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists of the papers and records of Walter Q. Gresham and his son, Otto Gresham. Walter Gresham material includes Civil War military correspondence, 1863–65, transcriptions of his personal letters, 1861–63, and responses to attacks made by his political opponents on his war record, 1893–94. There is also information regarding his promotion to brevet major general, 1866, and speeches to and about veterans, including his address at the unveiling of the Ulysses S. Grant statue in Chicago, 1891.

Walter Gresham's papers also contain his political correspondence including his runs for the presidential nomination on the Republican ticket in 1884 and 1888, letters encouraging him to run on the People's Party ticket in 1892, and his support for the candidacy of Grover Cleveland, also in 1892. There are two political scrapbooks kept by Michael C. Kerr, an U. S. Representative from Indiana from 1858 and 1873. The majority of Walter Gresham's legal materials consist of correspondence during his period as district judge, 1884–93, and contain information about cases to be reviewed and additional circumstances that attorneys and corporations wished to discuss. Many of these cases involved railroads and trusts.

Gresham's diplomatic papers contain correspondence and papers related to foreign affairs during his tenure as secretary of state, 1885–95, and reflect his opposition to American imperialism. Included in the correspondence are letters supporting his position against the annexation of Hawaii, 1893–94, and his opposition to the Nicaraguan Canal, 1893–94. There is also correspondence regarding the political situation among several Central and South American countries and the situation in China.

Among Walter Gresham's personal papers are letters of a general nature with friends and professional associates including Noble C. Butler, 1884–94, and Thomas Slaughter, 1867–78. Also included is a small amount of Gresham's personal financial records including tax receipts, 1859–93, and personal and professional expense records such as bills, cancelled checks, and receipts, 1859–93. Other items in the collection include letters and telegrams of sympathy to Gresham's family upon his death, 1895, as well as three scrapbooks of obituaries. There is also a formal tribute from the people of Hawaii (in Hawaiian with English translation) expressing condolences to his family and an expression of thanks for his stand on preventing the annexation of their people. Also included are records dealing with Gresham's estate, 1895–97.

Otto Gresham's papers include his political, legal, and personal correspondence, 1891–1946. His political correspondence comprises letters to presidents and political leaders presenting his views on a variety of issues including Cuban autonomy, 1906; his support of William Howard Taft for president, 1908; war bonds, 1918–23; and the League of Nations, 1918–25. Legal correspondence for cases in which he was involved include his position as an attorney for the Chicago & Erie Railroad charging the state of Indiana with unfair tax practices, 1892; the Brown and Moore murder trial in Orange County, Indiana 1911; the Angle case in Wisconsin, 1912, involving a dispute between a contractor's heirs and a railroad company from 1882 that included political overtones, and the Bertha Lowman case, 1934–35, involving an Indiana farm woman's claim of fraud against an insurance company.

The Otto Gresham papers also contain general and personal correspondence, 1891–1931, involving political, legal, and personal subjects. There are also several letters to Gresham from some Japanese diplomatic friends at their country's embassies in St. Petersburg, Russia, and Paris, France, 1900–09, and letters to friends and political acquaintances John B. Moore, 1895–1910, and James Hogan, 1900s–1910s. There is also correspondence between Gresham and individuals at the Library of Congress regarding the donation of some of his father's papers to their institution, 1930–31. Other Otto Gresham materials include correspondence about his father's biography, 1892–1919; rough drafts and notes of the biography, ca. 1910s; and other professional papers and speeches, 1900s–1946.

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CATALOGING INFORMATION

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