

Guide to the John Quillin Tilson Papers

MS 1132



compiled by Staff of Manuscripts and Archives

April 1983

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 1132

CREATOR: Tilson, John Q. (John Quillin), 1866-1958

TITLE: John Quillin Tilson papers

DATES: 1888-1956

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2.5 linear feet

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: Correspondence, speeches, travel diaries, and documents relating to John Q. Tilson's public life. The diary of his trip to Europe in 1925 was kept while studying munitions for a report to Calvin Coolidge. Another diary reports on a trip to the Orient in 1927. Correspondence reflects his service in the Connecticut National Guard and his connection with Yale Law School. He lectured there on parliamentary law from 1930 until his death, and papers from this course are also in the collection. Of particular interest in the correspondence is a letter from Calvin Coolidge (1923) and another from Cordell Hull (1940).

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Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1132>.

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

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

John Quillin Tilson Papers. Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

The son of a farmer, John Quillin Tilson was born in Clearbranch, Tennessee, on April 5, 1866. He attended public school and graduated with a B.A. from Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tennessee. He then came to Yale University, where he received a B.A. in 1891, an LL.B. in 1893, and an M.L. in 1894. In 1897, he was admitted to the bar in Connecticut. After leaving New Haven to fight in the Spanish-American War, Tilson returned to find himself a partner in the firm of White, Daggert & Tilson. In 1904, he was elected to serve in the Connecticut House of Representatives and in his second term, served as Speaker of the House. Between 1909 and 1912, he served Connecticut as a congressman-at-large. He was re-elected in 1914 and served until 1932. Between 1925 and 1930, he was the Republican majority leader of the House of Representatives. He was considered an expert on ordnance and a strong advocate of military preparedness. He was sent to Europe twice, once by Warren G. Harding in 1923, and again by Calvin Coolidge in 1925. After retiring from Congress, Tilson returned to law, first in Washington, D.C., and then in New Haven. In 1941, he became national treasurer of the Save the Children Federation. He was awarded numerous medals and was a member of many clubs and societies. On November 10, 1910, in New Haven, he was married to Marguerite, with whom he had three children: John Quillin, Margaret Field, and Katharine Sams. He died in New London, New Hampshire, on August 14, 1958.

Scope and Contents

The papers of John Quillin Tilson, which consist of fragments of what must originally have been more extensive records, reflect both his legal and his political career. The correspondence includes letters concerning Yale Law School alumni and the operation of the Law School dining hall; routine legal business; political issues and responses to letters from constituents; and one family letter (1907 Jun 24). Other letters deal with Tilson's service with the Connecticut National Guard, including recommendations for its reorganization and a description of maneuvers in Texas (1903 Apr 17, 1911 May 21). Also in the correspondence is a letter from Tilson to President Coolidge recommending a tax reduction (1923 Nov 20), and one from Cordell Hull to Tilson concerning a planned visit to Canada (1940 May 13).

Other papers in the collection include speeches and other short writings by Tilson on political and legal subjects; notes and travel diaries on various trips to Europe and the Orient, taken for the most part on behalf of the government; governmental reports concerning the cost of a portrait for the State Department; papers for a Parliamentary Law course taught by Tilson at Yale Law School in 1956; and an assortment of military and legal certificates and diplomas.

The provenance of this collection is unknown, as are the whereabouts of any other papers of John Q. Tilson.

Collection Contents

Inventory, 1888-1956, n.d.

b. 1, f. 1 - 4	Correspondence	1895-1940
b. 1, f. 5	Speeches	undated
b. 1, f. 6	Writings	1922, 1956, undated
b. 1, f. 7	Notes on European trip requested by War Department to report on post-war conditions	1922
	Travel diaries	
b. 1, f. 8	European trips	1897, 1925
b. 1, f. 9	Orient trip	1927
b. 1, f. 10	Reports on Committee on Expenditures in the State Department, relating to Hay portrait	undated
b. 1, f. 11	Parliamentary Law class papers	1956
	Legal documents	
b. 1, f. 12	Birth certificate, military appointments, legal appointments	1894-1952
b. 2	Diplomas	1888-1927

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

Law

Geographic Names

Asia

Europe -- Description and travel

New Haven (Conn.)

United States -- Politics and government --

20th Century

Occupations

Legislators

Names

Coolidge, Calvin, 1872-1933

Hull, Cordell, 1871-1955

Tilson, John Q. (John Quillin), 1866-1958

Corporate Bodies

United States. Congress. House

Yale Law School

Yale University -- Faculty