

**The New York Public Library
Humanities and Social Sciences Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

George Kennan Papers
1856-1987
Mss Col 1630

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Table of Contents

Summary	iii
Provenance note	iv
Related materials note	iv
Biographical note	v
Scope and content note	vii
Arrangement note	vii
Series descriptions and container list	1
SERIES I. CORRESPONDENCE, 1866-1924, N.D.	1
SERIES II. RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS ON RUSSIA AND THE SIBERIAN EXILE SYSTEM, 1856-CA. 1919, N.D.	2
II.A. Biographical sketches, 1883-ca. 1913, n.d.	2
II.B. Accounts of prison and exile system, 1881-1890, n.d.	3
II.C. Manuscripts of works by Russian exiles, n.d.	3
II.D. Other documents, 1856-ca. 1919, n.d.	4
SERIES III. WRITINGS, SPEECHES, PUBLICATIONS AND NOTES, 1866-1922, 1963, N.D.	4
SERIES IV. PERSONAL MISCELLANY AND PHOTOGRAPHS, 1863-1924, N.D.	5
SERIES V. KENNAN FAMILY PAPERS	5
V.A. Jeannette Hotchkiss, 1874-1987, n.d.	5
V.B. Emeline Weld Kennan, 1896-1933, n.d.	6
V.C. Other family members, 1889-1923, n.d.	6

Summary

- Main entry:** Kennan, George, 1845-1924
- Title:** George Kennan Papers, 1856-1987 (bulk 1866-1919)
- Size:** 3 linear feet (7 boxes)
- Source:** Donated by George Kennan, 1920; George Frost Kennan, 1988-1990; and purchases, 1945-1987
- Abstract:** George Kennan (1845-1924), American journalist, lecturer, and author, is best-known for his writings on Russia. He traveled extensively in Siberia from 1865-1867 with a Western Union telegraph surveying party, and again in 1885-1886 to research the Imperial Russian exile and prison systems. His writings and lectures influenced American policy and public opinion about Russia before the 1917 revolutions. In addition to his work on Siberia, Kennan covered the Spanish-American War and the Russo-Japanese War for the *Outlook* magazine. His papers include his correspondence and source documents collected from Russian exiles, a small amount of personal correspondence, drafts of manuscripts, a small number of photographs, and Kennan family papers.
- Access:** Apply in the Special Collections Office for admission to the Manuscripts and Archives Division.
- Preferred citation:** George Kennan Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
- Special formats** Photographs, Sketch maps, Sketches.

Provenance note

At the time of accession, Kennan's papers included a number photographs of Siberian exiles. These items were transferred to the Slavic and Baltic Division, and can be viewed in the New York Public Library Digital Gallery as part of the collection "[Portraits of Russian Exiles and Convicts....](#)"

Related materials note

[Russia and Eastern Europe in Rare Photographs, 1860-1945](#). The New York Public Library Digital Gallery.

[Catherine Breshkovsky Papers, 1923-1934](#). Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Papers of George Kennan, 1840-1937. Manuscripts Division. Library of Congress.

[Meeting of Frontiers: Selections from the George Kennan Papers](#), Library of Congress.

Biographical note

George Kennan, journalist, lecturer and author, is best known for his writings on Imperial Russia. Born in 1845 in Norwalk, Ohio to attorney John Kennan and Mary Anne Morse Kennan, the young George left school at the age of twelve to take work as a telegrapher.

During the years of the American Civil War, he worked with the Military Telegraph Corps, which later led to employment with Western Union. In 1865, at the age of twenty, he was chosen for a Western Union expedition investigating the feasibility of laying telegraph cable from Alaska across the Pacific Ocean to Siberia. Traveling as part of a small team and with no previous knowledge of the Russian language, Kennan and his cohort trekked for a year by horseback, telega cart, dog sled and canoe. They endured the vagaries of the Siberian winter sleeping in tents and quartering with the nomadic Korak population. In 1866, expedition members had already begun erecting telegraph poles across the Siberian landscape when they received the belated news of the success of the Atlantic cable, which nullified their project. Kennan used this opportunity to travel across the entire Russian continent to Europe, and then returned home in 1867. His first book based on these travels, *Tent Life in Siberia*, was roundly praised after its publication in 1870.

Also in 1870, Kennan spent a year traveling in another outpost of the Russian Empire, the Caucasus. It was during this time that he began submitting articles to various publications, thus beginning his career as a journalist and cementing his reputation as an explorer and expert on Russia.

Upon his return to the United States, he worked in business for several years in Medina, NY, where he met Emeline Weld, whom he married in 1879. In 1877 he moved to Washington, D.C. to begin work as an assistant manager for the Associated Press, a job he held until 1885. In 1881, based on his professional reputation and skill, he was called to the White House to manage the telegraph and press reports of President Garfield's assassination.

In 1885, Roswell Smith, publisher of the serial magazine *The Century*, contacted Kennan with a commission for a series of articles on the Siberian prison and exile system. Kennan gladly accepted the assignment and arranged for a friend, artist George A. Frost, to accompany him and illustrate their voyage. Initially supportive of the tsarist government's efforts to maintain order against what he assumed to be a wave of Nihilists and revolutionaries, Kennan was soon surprised to find himself in sympathy with the radicals he so recently scorned. In his tours of Russian prisons and numerous meetings with exiles--among them Katherine Breshkovskaia, the "Grandmother of the Revolution"--he discovered many convicts to be from the educated classes, and found many guilty of crimes he felt to be legitimate opposition to the tyranny and arbitrary nature of the tsarist system.

In his series of articles for the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* (published between 1887 and 1891), Kennan exposed the abuses of the penal system. He highlighted the inhumane practice of total seclusion and indefinite detention of arrestees practiced in the Peter-Paul and Schlüsselberg fortresses in St. Petersburg, as well as wrote about the journey to Siberia, traveled on foot by already exhausted and malnourished prisoners. He discussed the years of grueling mining work to which many were sentenced, as well as the horrid living conditions in which they were maintained. The violence to which exiles were subjected--floggings, beatings, shootings and hangings--was also exposed in his articles. Collected together into a two-volume book, *Siberia and the Exile System* (1891), his writings shocked the American public, and created high demand for Kennan as a public lecturer. According to the lecture schedule in his papers, between 1889 and 1900 he delivered more than five hundred talks on Russia, often appearing dressed in the rags and chains of exiles. Through this work, Kennan soon became the leading influence on anti-tsarist sentiment in the United States.

Russia was not Kennan's sole focus, however. He also traveled to Cuba as a war correspondent for the *Outlook* magazine during the Spanish-American War, to Japan during the Russo-Japanese War, and traveled to and wrote about the Philippines, Korea, China, and Martinique. Kennan's other interests included Native American rights and railway development in the United States. He was the

author of a biography of E.H. Harriman, railroad magnate and financier of the Harriman Alaska Expedition.

In addition to his work as an author, Kennan worked as an assistant manager of the Associated Press (1877-1885), vice president of the American Red Cross (1898), and vice president of the Medina Publishing Company. He also served as vice president of the American branch of the Society of the Friends of Russian Freedom. The Society sought to raise funds for the support of anti-tsarist Russian exiles and counted among its founding members Mark Twain, Alice Stone Blackwell, and William Lloyd Garrison.

George Kennan died following a stroke on May 10, 1924.

Scope and content note

George Kennan's papers, spanning 1856 to 1924, document his Russian travels and research, and his relationships with Siberian exiles and radical revolutionaries. His professional writings and lectures are well-documented within the collection, and to a lesser degree, so are his efforts to influence American foreign and economic policy towards the Imperial Russian government. One finds a small glimpse into Kennan and his wife Emeline Weld Kennan's personal life through their correspondence, in particular concerning their friendship with the family of Alexander Graham Bell.

While this collection contains letters related to Kennan's 1865 and 1885 Russian expeditions, his travels through the Caucasus in 1870 are not mentioned.

Included within the collection are correspondence, lists of Siberian exiles and biographical sketches of several individuals, often anonymous accounts and official reports on the system and its many abuses, a number of manuscripts by both Kennan and Russian authors, newspaper clippings and a small amount of printed matter, and personal miscellany including several photographs and addresses. Also included are some Kennan family papers, consisting of his wife's personal correspondence, and his grandniece Jeannette Hotchkiss's collected research notes, manuscripts, and correspondence. As the family authority on the elder Kennan, Hotchkiss intended to write a biography of her uncle. Notable within her materials are a small number of the letters of artist George Frost, Kennan's friend and fellow Siberian explorer.

Many of the Siberian research documents and items of correspondence are identified by document numbers. While these numbers were present at the time of donation to the library, it is uncertain what they represent, and who assigned them. There are significant gaps in the numbering, and there does not appear to be a coherent organizing principle behind them. Nevertheless, the numbers and matching envelopes, many of which have a brief description of the document, have been retained.

In English, Russian and French.

Arrangement note

The George Kennan Papers are organized in the following series:

Series I. Correspondence, 1866-1924, n.d.

Series II. Research and publications on Russia and the Siberian exile system, 1856-ca. 1919, n.d.

Series III. Writings, speeches, publications and notes, 1866-1922, 1963, n.d.

Series IV. Personal miscellany and photographs, 1863-1924, n.d.

Series V. Kennan family papers

Series descriptions and container list

Series I. Correspondence, 1866-1924, n.d.

1 box

The bulk of Kennan's personal and professional correspondence is arranged chronologically. Following the chronological arrangement are separate folders for letters from Adam Bialoveski, Katherine Breshkovskaia, Egor Lazarev, and Russian exiles.

The letters at the earlier end of the date span are primarily family letters, including missives sent home by Kennan over the course of his first Siberian travels. Full of information on the sights, people and hardships he encountered, these letters also often express nostalgia for home. As with much of his correspondence, and indeed much of the tone of *Tent Life in Siberia*, these letters give one a sense of his wit and warmth, poking fun at misery experienced on the expedition. The letters here are addressed to his father John, sisters Jennie and Harriet, nephew Kossuth (father to George F. Kennan), and the young George F. Kennan.

There are also a number of letters written by Siberian exiles. Those addressed directly to Kennan are arranged within his chronological correspondence or by author, and those which represent third-party correspondence forwarded to him are arranged within the last folder of the collection, "Other exiles' correspondence." The majority of these last letters, sent largely for informational purposes, were sent to Kennan from his contacts Moises Shlikerman and Dr. Wollman.

Of interest are the May 11, 1886 letter to David McKee, in which Kennan discussed George Frost's mental illness during their travels through Siberia, and the May 22, 1917 letter to David Fairchild in which Kennan addressed Charles R. Crane's belief that the February revolution had been a bloodless one. Kennan predicted the waves of violence that would follow with the Bolshevik Revolution later that year.

Letters received from Baron S.A. Korf in July and August of 1918 indicate Kennan's influence on American foreign policy with regard to the new Russian republic. Korf criticized Louis Brandeis and Elihu Root for restraining the United States from providing aid, and asked Kennan to use his influence with Secretary of State Robert Lansing to come to the aid of the Russian people, as opposed to the Bolsheviks, whom he felt would eventually fall away.

A selection of letters written by Katherine Breshkovskaia are also present within Kennan's correspondence. The majority are copies that may have come to Kennan through his involvement with the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom. The letters addressed to such individuals as Alice Stone Blackwell, Lillian Wald, Isabel Barrows, Helena Dudley and Ellen Gates Starr discuss her life in exile in great detail.

Other correspondence relates to Kennan's work in Cuba, his efforts on behalf of the American Red Cross, and letters from admirers of his writings.

Prominent correspondents include: Lyman Abbott, Adam Bialoveski, Nikolai Chaikovski, Charles A. Dana, David Fairchild, W.D. Foulke, W.H. Gilder, Gilbert Grosvenor, George Frost Kennan, Baron S.A. Korf, Sergius Kravchinskii ("Stepniak"), Peter Kropotkin, and Egor Lazarev.

Letters are in English, French and Russian.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
1	1	1866-1870, 1881-1883
	2	1885-1888
	3	1889-1891
	4	1892-1898
	5	1903-1916
	6	1917-1920
	7	1922-1924, n.d.
	8	Adam Bialoveski, 1885-1888, 1906-1907
2	1	Katherine Breshkovskaia, 1910-1919, n.d.
	2	Egor Lazarev, 1890-1892, 1917, n.d.
	3	Other exiles' correspondence, 1880-1890, n.d.

Series II. Research and publications on Russia and the Siberian exile system, 1856-ca. 1919, n.d.

2 boxes

Kennan's research and publications on Russia are divided into four categories of material: biographical sketches on exiles; accounts of Russian prisons and the exile system; manuscripts of writings by Russian exiles; and other documents, which consist primarily of statistics, reports, and official communications.

Many of the items sent from Siberia are unattributed or written by anonymous authors. In addition, two of Kennan's correspondents, Dr. Wollman and Moises Shlikerman, appear to have collected many of the items and sent them to Kennan for his research. Their contributions are noted on the itemized list included in box 6, folder 6 of this collection, as well as on the numbered document envelopes maintained with the documents themselves.

There is some overlap of themes between the biographies and accounts of prison and exile, as materials in both pertain to the Yakutsk massacre, the Kara mines, and individuals associated with both.

In English, French and Russian.

II.A. Biographical sketches, 1883-ca. 1913, n.d.

The biographical sketches on Siberian exiles arranged here, a few of which are autobiographical, were received by Kennan and used as primary research for his book. In each instance, they explain the family and educational circumstances of the individual, the reason for their arrest and sentencing to Siberia, and their experiences within the penal system. The genres of writing range from correspondence to memoir manuscripts.

In English and Russian.

2	4	Armfeldt, Nathalie. Sergius Stepniak's description of, ca. 1888
	5	Kohan-Bernstein, Lev and Sofia, n.d.
	6	Korba, Anna Pavlovna, 1883, 1885, n.d.
	7	Korolenko, L., n.d.
	8	Kovalskaia, Elizabeth, n.d.
	9	Kutitonskaia, Maria, ca. 1885, n.d.
	10	Linev, Ivan, n.d.
	11	Neustroev, Konstantin, n.d.
	12	Shlikerman, Moises, 1886-1891, n.d.
	13	Voitinski, Vladimir, ca. 1913

II.B. Accounts of prison and exile system, 1881-1890, n.d.

Documents arranged here pertain to the prisons and exile towns of Irkutsk, Kara, and Yakutsk, and include correspondence, written testimonies, illustrations and plans of prison cells, descriptions of trial proceedings, newspaper clippings, and a few official documents. While many of these accounts were sent from Siberia, several were written and sent by former exiles who subsequently settled in France.

Of particular interest are materials pertaining to the Yakutsk massacre of 1889, which was precipitated by exiles' having petitioned the provincial governor, protesting changes to the regulations managing their comings and goings. In response, the chief of police sent out Cossack guards armed with bayonet-fixed rifles to break up a peaceful meeting of the petitioners, which resulted in several shootings and bayoneting of unarmed exiles, and the shooting of two guards. Following the fracas, it was reported that six exiles and a guard had died, and twelve exiles and one guard were wounded. The surviving exiles were tried by court-martial, resulting in extended prison, exile, and hard labor terms for fourteen, and condemnation to hanging for four of them. Particularly egregious was the case of Kohan-Bernstein, who had been injured during the scuffle. Condemned to hang, he was found to be too incapacitated to stand on the scaffold; the hangman's noose was placed around his neck while he lay on his hospital cot.

Included with the Yakutsk documents are first and third-person testimonies regarding the events, manuscripts about other exiles' protests in response to news of the massacre, and newspaper clippings with official government reports of the events.

Also of interest in this subseries is the file on the Kara political prison and mines. Included are descriptions of the prison facilities and life within; authorities' abuse of convicts; plans of the prison and sketches of mining operations; samples of cipher cards used to decode the prisoners' knock alphabet; and a song entitled "Song of the Kara Convicts."

In Russian and English.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
2	14	Irkutsk prison, n.d.
	15	Kara political prison and mines, 1881-ca. 1888, n.d.
	16	Yakutsk massacre, 1889-1890, n.d.
3	1	Prison and mine plans and sketches, 1885, n.d.

II.C. Manuscripts of works by Russian exiles, n.d.

The following titles comprise the Russian exiles' manuscripts transmitted to Kennan. It is unknown whether he was expected to find publishers for these works, or whether they were for his edification only. Several are by anonymous authors.

In Russian.

3	2	<i>Liquidation of Politicals at the Nerchinsk Katorga</i> , n.d.
	3	Poetry by Sinigub, n.d.
	4	Sketches of Administrative Exile, n.d.
	5	<i>A Study of the Evolution of Socialist-Revolutionary Ideas in Russia</i> , n.d.
	6	Manuscript on the revolutionary movement and a timeline, n.d.

II.D. Other documents, 1856-ca. 1919, n.d.

Included in this subseries are two lists of over a thousand names of Siberian exiles (Box 3, folder 7); miscellaneous reports and documents written by government functionaries; correspondence regarding the exile community, including both exile petitions to the authorities and correspondence between officials; a sample of the constitution of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic (RSFSR); the program of the Will of the People (Narodnaia Volia) and a corresponding letter to Alexander III; proof sheets of Siberian newspapers upon return from the censor; and other miscellaneous documents.

In Russian and English.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
3	7	Statistics, government reports and official communications, 1856-1903, n.d.
	8	Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic (RSFSR) Constitution, ca. 1919
	9	Program of the Will of the People (Narodnaia Volia) and letter to Alexander III, 1885, n.d.
	10	Proof sheets of Siberian newspapers after review by censor, n.d.
	11	Miscellaneous, 1885, n.d.

Series III. Writings, speeches, publications and notes, 1866-1922, 1963, n.d.

2 boxes

A selection of Kennan's writings, both fiction and nonfiction, texts for his speeches, and notes are included in this subseries. The materials collected, however, by no means constitute a complete representation of his work.

Pertaining to events in Russia, Cuba and China, the writings include his first submission of Russian news analysis to a newspaper. Also present is one folder of miscellaneous incomplete manuscripts which appear to represent three different stories. The bulk of these are double-sided, with different stories on each side of each page. Many pages are numbered, but it is nonetheless very difficult to establish a coherent sequence of pages for any of the three stories.

One folder of "writings by others" includes profiles written about Kennan, as well as other miscellaneous articles.

3	12	The Causes of the Shanghai Riot, n.d.
	13	Cuba and the Cubans , lecture, n.d.
	14	Experiences in Siberia as part of Western Union telegraph survey party, 1866-1869
4	1	Items of interest from Russian papers, 1901
	2	Napoleonder, 1903
	3	The Old Education and the New in China, n.d.
	4	Review of Schuyler's translation of Tolstoi's <i>Cossacks</i> and word list, n.d.
	5	The Rise and Fall of the Chinese Republic and map, n.d.
	6	Russian Political Exiles, lecture, n.d.
	7	<i>Siberia and the Exile System; Exiles at Irkutsk</i> , Russian translation of chapter from <i>The Century</i> , varies from text, n.d.
	8	A Visit to Count Tolstoi, n.d.
	9	A Voice for the Russian People, 1893
	10	Holograph Russian translation of <i>A Voice for the Russian People</i> , 1963
	11	Who are Russia's Real Revolutionists?, ca. 1917
5	1	Miscellaneous incomplete manuscripts, n.d.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
5	2	Miscellaneous publications, 1887-1922, n.d.
	3	Notes on pogroms, ca. 1910
	4	Notes from "Rech" newspaper, n.d.
	5	Schedule of San Francisco articles, ca. 1907
	6	San Francisco dates, ca. 1907
	7	Notes and clippings, 1891-1918, n.d.
	8	Writings by others, n.d.

Series IV. Personal miscellany and photographs, 1863-1924, n.d.

0.5 box

The personal miscellany consists of Kennan's address book, his lecture tour schedule documenting the busy tour seasons of 1889 and 1890, the official documents permitting him to travel in Siberia, and a small number of photographs and other images.

The photographs portray Kennan variously bundled against the Siberian cold, sailing, and in academic garb; his parents John and Mary Ann Morse Kennan; his wife Emeline Weld Kennan as a young child and an adult; their vacation home and the interior of their house in Washington, D.C.

5	9	Address book, n.d.
	10	Lecture tour schedule and writing notebook, 1889-1900, n.d.
	11	Letters of permission for travel in Siberia, 1885 May
	12	Photographs and images, ca. 1863-1924, n.d.

Series V. Kennan family papers

2 boxes

The collection of Kennan family papers consist of materials collected by George Kennan's grandniece Jeannette Hotchkiss as research for an intended biography of him, Emeline Weld Kennan's correspondence and personal miscellany, and a small amount of papers belonging to other family members.

In English.

V.A. Jeannette Hotchkiss, 1874-1987, n.d.

Jeannette Hotchkiss, grandniece of George Kennan and sister of George F. Kennan, was the family authority on her granduncle and intended to write his biography. In preparation for her work, she collected biographical and reference material, including correspondence, biographical summaries and articles, samples of his writings, the initial inventory of materials in the Kennan Papers at The New York Public Library, a collection of papers related to George Frost (including letters written by him to others), and assorted newspaper clippings and notes. There is also a draft of her manuscript on Kennan.

Hotchkiss's correspondence pertains to her genealogical research, as well as her role of authority on her uncle. Her brother George F. Kennan forwarded all communications requesting information on the elder George Kennan to her for response; some of George F. Kennan's letters are present as well.

In addition to her correspondence related to Kennan, Hotchkiss also collected correspondence related to his friend, the artist and fellow explorer George Frost. Frost materials include copies of letters from Kennan to Frost, beginning with invitations to join the expedition as official illustrator and continuing through

Frost's illness and eventual return home. The letters indicate the depth of their collegial relationship and offer additional information of interest on Kennan's second Siberian exploration.

Arranged with the Frost documents are copies of letters he received from other individuals, and letters he wrote to a friend and neighbor, James W. Hunnewell. The latter include original letters, several of which contain descriptions of his expedition, and are in fact postmarked from Russia. Hunnewell's son Frederick forwarded these materials to George F. Kennan in 1948.

The original inventory of the Kennan Papers at The New York Public Library, with its item-level descriptions, including document numbers, has been retained within Hotchkiss's papers.

In English and Russian.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
6	1-2	Correspondence, 1947-1986, n.d. Letters collected as source material for a biography of Kennan, 1874-1898, n.d.
	3	George Kennan's letters to George Frost, 1885-1898
	4	Others' letters to Frost, 1874-1896
	5	Frost letters to James W. Hunnewell, 1885-1886
	6	Research on Kennan, 1888-1987, n.d.
7	1	Notes and drafts for a biography of George Kennan, n.d.

V.B. Emeline Weld Kennan, 1896-1933, n.d.

Mrs. Kennan's papers consist of personal correspondence, an address book and social calendar, a timeline of George Kennan's life, and a scrapbook of newspaper clippings, primarily containing her husband's Medina Tribune column.

The correspondence consists of incoming and outgoing letters of a personal nature, the bulk of which are letters exchanged with Marian "Daisy" Fairchild, daughter of Alexander Graham Bell, and her husband David, a botanist and explorer. The Kennans and the Bells became acquainted in Baddeck, Nova Scotia, where both families maintained vacation homes.

The timeline of Kennan's life, written by Emeline Kennan and titled "Chronologies," is an extremely detailed account of her husband's life between 1845 and 1917. For many years there are nearly daily entries on his activities.

In English.

7	2-3	Correspondence, 1896-1933
	4	'Chronologies,' a timeline of Kennan's life, 1930
	5	Address book and social calendar, n.d.
	6	Scrapbook and clippings, 1923-1925

V.C. Other family members, 1889-1923, n.d.

Materials consist of correspondence, memorial booklets, writings and speeches, and printed matter.

7		John Kennan correspondence, 1893
8		Mary Ann Morse Kennan writing and memorabilia, 1896, 1898
9		Ellen Gertrude Kennan Moore, correspondence, speeches, printed matter, 1889, 1923, n.d.