

# *The Papers of Henry A. Wallace*

EARL M. ROGERS

The 55,000 items of correspondence which are presently to be found in the large collection of personal papers of Henry A. Wallace in the University of Iowa Libraries have recently been microfilmed on 67 reels. An index to this material as well as to 43 reels of Wallace correspondence in the Library of Congress and 54 reels at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library has been prepared by the University Libraries and will be published soon. Even before publication of this index, the Wallace papers at Iowa have attracted many researchers. Already there have been more than 40 visits in person by off-campus scholars, and our staff has replied to nearly 200 mail inquiries.

Henry Agard Wallace was born October 7, 1888, on a farm near Orient, Adair County, Iowa. He was a grandson of Henry Wallace<sup>1</sup> (1836-1916), who was known as "Uncle Henry," first editor of the Iowa farm magazine, *Wallaces' Farmer*, which is still published in Des Moines after several changes of ownership.<sup>2</sup> His father was Henry Cantwell Wallace (1866-1924), called "Harry," then a tenant farmer, who later became second editor of the family periodical and eventually served as Secretary of Agriculture under Harding and Coolidge (1921-1924).<sup>3</sup> Wallace, the first of six children of Henry C. and Carrie Mae Brodhead Wallace, was born into a family characterized by loyalty and pride in the accomplishments of its members. Henry C. and his family moved to Ames in 1892, then to Des Moines, and Henry A. went back to Ames as a student, graduating from Iowa State University in 1910.

In the next decade Wallace worked on the family paper, experi-

---

<sup>1</sup> Henry Wallace, *Uncle Henry's Own Story of His Life: Personal Reminiscences . . .*, 3 vols. (Des Moines: Wallace Publishing Co., 1917-19); and Russell Lord, *The Wallaces of Iowa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1947). Lord's family biography also covers the next two generations of Henry Wallaces.

<sup>2</sup> Donald R. Murphy, "The Centennial of a Farm Paper," *Palimpsest*, 37 (September, 1956), pp. 449-480.

<sup>3</sup> Donald L. Winters, *Henry Cantwell Wallace as Secretary of Agriculture, 1921-1924* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970).

mented with corn breeding, and, on May 20, 1914, married Ilo Browne of Indianola, Iowa. His interest in corn led to the founding in 1926 of what is now Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc., of Des Moines, a commercial producer of hybrid seed corn.

Furthermore, his interest in statistics put Wallace on the fringes of early computer development.<sup>4</sup> He edited *Wallaces' Farmer* from 1921, when his father joined Harding's cabinet, to 1933, when Henry A. himself became Secretary of Agriculture. The economic problems of Iowa agriculture, acute after 1929, were of considerable concern to the young farm editor, and his leadership and his support of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932 brought him into national politics. The U.S. Department of Agriculture was from the beginning one of the major agencies of the New Deal, and as head of the USDA during the years 1933 to 1940 Wallace became, in the opinion of many people, our greatest Secretary of Agriculture.

President Roosevelt selected Wallace as his vice-presidential candidate in the third-term election of 1940. Wallace was given responsible positions in the mobilization for war, particularly as chairman of the Board of Economic Warfare, and he became a principal liberal spokesman.<sup>5</sup> His political rise ended in 1943 when, for political reasons, the BEW was abolished; Harry S. Truman was nominated in his place in 1944. At the end of Wallace's vice-presidential term in January, 1945, Roosevelt appointed him Secretary of Commerce, displacing his rival Jesse Jones. After a bitter struggle the appointment was confirmed by the Senate a little more than a month before Roosevelt's death. Increasingly, Wallace disagreed publicly with the new Truman administration's policies on Russia, which had so recently been a major wartime ally, and the result was Wallace's firing in September, 1946.

Wallace then became editor of the *New Republic* for more than a year and was a major opponent of Truman's Cold War foreign policy. In 1948 he was the presidential candidate of the Progressive Party<sup>6</sup> (1948-1954), which was accused of being under Communist domina-

---

<sup>4</sup> Jay L. Lush, "Early Statistics at Iowa State University," in *Statistical Papers in Honor of George W. Snedecor*, edited by Theodore A. Bancroft (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1972), pp. 211-226. Also Charles Eames, *A Computer Perspective* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 88-89.

<sup>5</sup> Many of Wallace's wartime speeches and articles were published as *The Century of the Common Man*, edited by Russell Lord (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1943); and *Democracy Reborn*, edited by Russell Lord (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1944).

<sup>6</sup> See Curtis D. MacDougall, *Gideon's Army*, 3 vols. (New York: Marzani & Munsell, 1965); and Karl M. Schmidt, *Henry A. Wallace: Quixotic Crusade 1948* (Syracuse University Press, 1960).

tion. He and his running mate, Senator Glen Taylor<sup>7</sup> of Idaho, received 1,157,000 votes, not enough to prevent Truman's re-election. At the outbreak of the Korean War, Wallace severed his ties with the Progressive Party and retired from politics.

In 1945 Wallace had bought Farvue Farm, South Salem, New York, and in his retirement there he continued his interest in genetics, including strawberry breeding<sup>8</sup>; the family business; farm policy; the world food problem; and world peace. He died in Danbury, Connecticut, November 18, 1965.

Henry A. Wallace's active and varied career led to the creation of a substantial body of written documents and other evidences of his thought and action. By the late 1920's Wallace, as a prominent farm editor, had a flourishing correspondence with Iowa farmers and with farm leaders and economists across the country. His interest in genetics, particularly hybrid corn, also resulted in much correspondence with his associates.

As Secretary of Agriculture and holder of other federal posts until 1946, Wallace had much official correspondence as well as personal and political communications with relatives, old friends in Iowa, and fellow New Dealers. Speeches to a wider audience and several books added to the published and unpublished record.<sup>9</sup> Scrapbooks and lists of appointments and business trips were kept. Such controversial events as the struggle for confirmation as Secretary of Commerce in 1945 and the Madison Square Garden Speech that caused Truman to fire him in 1946 brought thousands of letters, postcards, and telegrams from his supporters and a few from his opponents. During a few of these years Wallace kept a diary.

After 1946 Wallace was without a long-term office and secretary, and the quantity of his surviving correspondence is less, especially after his resignation from the Progressive Party in 1950. Many letters he typed himself without making carbon copies. Relatively few speeches were made after 1950. Columbia University made an Oral History interview, and one copy of the transcript was given to Wallace.

Henry A. Wallace's personal papers were given to the University of Iowa Libraries by his widow and children and with the cooperation of

---

<sup>7</sup> F. Ross Peterson, *Prophet without Honor: Glen Taylor & the Fight for American Liberalism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974).

<sup>8</sup> Wallace inspired and encouraged the writing of George M. Darrow, *The Strawberry: History, Breeding, and Physiology* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966).

<sup>9</sup> See the detailed list of Wallace's publications on pp. 107-123 of Frank Paluka, *Iowa Authors: A Bio-Bibliography of Sixty Native Writers* (Iowa City: Friends of the University of Iowa Libraries, 1967).

other relatives, carrying out his wishes as expressed before his death. Donald Murphy, who had succeeded Wallace as editor of *Wallaces' Farmer*, gave an important group of Wallace letters in his possession. Many other Wallace correspondents were contacted and invited to donate originals or copies of their Wallace letters; their response has been generous. The letters from Wallace's later years are particularly useful because there were few carbons of out-going correspondence in his own files.

Other collections of more official papers are in several federal repositories. The Library of Congress has a Henry A. Wallace collection, primarily from the vice-presidential term, transferred by Wallace in 1944-1945. It occupies 34 feet of shelf space and consists of correspondence and memoranda, 1940-1944; scrapbooks, 1934-1944; and newspaper clippings, 1941-1944. Except for the scrapbooks, the Wallace papers at the Library of Congress were microfilmed in 1971 in 43 reels. The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York, has a larger collection (39 linear feet), also from the vice-presidential term, of correspondence and other papers, 1941-1945. The Wallace papers at the FDR Library were microfilmed in 1972 in 54 reels. Wallace's correspondence as Secretary of Agriculture and Secretary of Commerce is at the National Archives.<sup>10</sup> The Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri, has, like the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, the papers of many of Wallace's political associates, in which his letters and activities appear.

Additional Wallace letters can be found in the manuscript collections of his correspondents—politicians, scientists, economists, and others. The papers of several, including Nils A. Olsen and L. H. Pammel, are at Iowa State University, Ames. The University of Missouri, Syracuse University, and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin are among institutions with Wallace letters that should not be overlooked. The University of Iowa, of course, holds the papers of several of Wallace's Iowa relatives and friends. Among the collections are those of Henry A. Wallace's grandfather, Henry Wallace, his father, Henry C. Wallace, and his uncle and confidant, Daniel Alden Wallace (1878-1954), editor of *The Farmer*, St. Paul, Minnesota. The small but informative Edward L. and Frederick H. Schapsmeier Collection on Henry A. Wallace was assembled in the preparation of a biography of Wallace by the Schapsmeiers.<sup>11</sup> Iowa has a very large collection of the

---

<sup>10</sup> Record Groups 16 (Agriculture), 40 (Commerce), and 145 (Agricultural Adjustment Administration) should be useful.

<sup>11</sup> *Henry A. Wallace of Iowa: The Agrarian Years, 1910-1940* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1968); and *Prophet in Politics: Henry A. Wallace and the War Years, 1940-1965* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1970).

papers of Wallace's Progressive Party<sup>12</sup> as well as the papers of Lewis C. Frank, Jr., a Wallace speechwriter in 1948. Other collections at Iowa on twentieth-century agricultural policy are the papers of Rudolph Martin Evans (1890-1956) of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration; Edwin Thomas Meredith<sup>13</sup> (1876-1928), founder of *Successful Farming* and *Better Homes and Gardens* and Secretary of Agriculture (1920-1921); Milo Reno (1866-1936), a leader of the Iowa Farmers Union and Farm Holiday; Brainard Hayes Shearer (1881-1970), publisher of the *Iowa Union Farmer*; the John L. Shover Collection on the National Farmers' Holiday Association; the Fred W. Stover Progressive Party materials; and the U.S. Farmers Association records. Much Wallace correspondence of value to historians is still in private hands. Occasional letters of special interest and value have apparently already vanished, leaving behind only references to them in the remainder of the correspondence.

The heart of the Henry A. Wallace papers at Iowa is his correspondence—originals and carbon copies of letters, telegrams, postcards, and a wide variety of enclosures and attachments. The earliest item is an engraved announcement of his paternal grandparents' silver wedding anniversary a month before his birth, and the latest is a letter from Donald Murphy to Wallace's brother in 1966. Because the correspondence arrived in the University Libraries over a period of several years and from a wide variety of sources in addition to the family, it was arranged chronologically, recreating the original sequence and allowing the researcher to study events in Wallace's life as they happened. The manuscript boxes contain approximately 55,000 items of correspondence and occupy 27 feet of shelf space.

Iowa also has a large collection of Wallace's speeches, manuscript, typed, mimeographed, or printed, largely from 1933 to 1950, but others as early as 1923 and as late as 1964. In some cases there are several drafts of a speech before its delivery. The speeches, which are also arranged chronologically, occupy 38 linear feet.<sup>14</sup>

Useful for showing how a government official was scheduled to spend his time—whom he met and where he went—are thirteen appointment books, two for 1933 and one for each year thereafter through early 1945, loose sheets of typed daily schedules from March 2, 1945, to September 20, 1946, and typed trip schedules from Wallace's years

---

<sup>12</sup> For the party and its papers at Iowa see Marc J. Epstein, "The Progressive Party of 1948," *Books at Iowa*, 16 (April, 1972), pp. 34-40.

<sup>13</sup> See Peter L. Petersen, "Some Research Opportunities in the Papers of Edwin T. Meredith, 1876-1928," *Books at Iowa*, 7 (November, 1967), pp. 32-40.

<sup>14</sup> There are also Wallace speeches in the Alfred Schindler Papers at the Truman Library. Schindler was Undersecretary of Commerce under Wallace.

in office. Secretaries' summaries of telephone conversations in Wallace's office in the Department of Commerce are retained in a separate sequence.

The papers include a brief sequence of memoranda, 1934-1965, mostly by Wallace himself and in his handwriting. One, on the funeral of Franklin D. Roosevelt, has recently been published by the Friends of the University of Iowa Libraries.<sup>15</sup> It and several others contain Wallace's private thoughts about figures in the Roosevelt and Truman administrations. Memoranda by others on various governmental topics likewise appear in the Wallace correspondence.

Another eleven linear feet are occupied by Wallace's diary, 1935, 1939-1940, and 1942-1946,<sup>16</sup> and his personal copy of Columbia University's Oral History transcript. Both are under seal until November 18, 1975, ten years after his death. The remaining Wallace papers at Iowa, on 67 feet of shelf space, are scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, books, issues of periodicals, separate articles, bulletins, theses on Wallace, photographs, political cartoons, speech recordings, correspondence duplicates, and miscellaneous materials.

A microfilm edition of the Henry A. Wallace papers at The University of Iowa has been prepared.<sup>17</sup> In 67 reels, the microfilm edition contains the correspondence (with attachments and enclosures), appointment books, schedules, telephone conversations, and miscellaneous papers (especially memoranda).

An index to the correspondence in the three microfilm editions of Wallace papers at The University of Iowa, the Library of Congress, and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library has also been prepared by the University of Iowa Libraries. The index is in two parts, each with approximately 150,000 entries. The first, an index to every correspondent (including some corporate bodies) in the three collections, other than Henry A. Wallace himself, will soon be published in two volumes by the University of Iowa Libraries. Each index entry has the name, the date of the letter, a code to identify one of the three libraries, and the microfilm reel and frame number. The entries further identify both the sender and the recipient of the letter. The second part consists of slips

---

<sup>15</sup> *Miscellaneous Recollections of the Interment Train, April 14-15, 1945* (Iowa City: Friends of the University of Iowa Libraries, 1974).

<sup>16</sup> With the permission of the Wallace family, a large portion of the otherwise-closed diary has been edited for publication as Henry A. Wallace, *The Price of Vision: The Diary of Henry A. Wallace, 1942-1946*, edited by John Morton Blum (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973). The book has a long biographical introduction, and the diary selections comprise about one-fourth of the original text for the years covered.

<sup>17</sup> Earl M. Rogers, *Guide to a Microfilm Edition of the Henry A. Wallace Papers at The University of Iowa* (Iowa City: The University of Iowa Libraries, 1974).

for each personal and corporate name found in the texts of the letters; this unpublished slip index is available for consultation in the Special Collections Department of the University of Iowa Libraries.

Dr. Leslie W. Dunlap, Dean of Library Administration at The University of Iowa, conceived the joint microfilming and indexing project and obtained financial support for it. He enlisted the cooperation of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and the Library of Congress in microfilming their Wallace papers and making them available for indexing. He obtained grants from the National Historical Publications Commission to microfilm the Wallace papers at Iowa and to assist, along with the Wallace Genetic Foundation and the Friends of the University of Iowa Libraries, in the publication of the joint index to correspondents. Fred Shelley, Deputy Director of the Commission, generously gave technical advice to the project. The Wallace Genetic Foundation supported Iowa's indexing of the Wallace papers at the other two libraries.

Wallace's varied public career and the accidents of preservation have resulted in a somewhat uneven coverage of topics available for research in the Wallace correspondence and other papers at Iowa. A substantial body of correspondence survives for the period from the late twenties to March, 1933, when Wallace left Des Moines for Washington. It centers on his roles as farm editor and geneticist and is dominated by the Depression, leading to a search for economic solutions and to the political campaign of 1932. Very much less remains for the rest of the thirties. Presumably the bulk of that correspondence is at the National Archives. Although important as well as routine correspondence from the vice-presidential term is at the Library of Congress and the Roosevelt Library, a moderate quantity is available at Iowa. The joint index has revealed that copies of a few letters from this period appear in more than one of the three libraries. The greatest number of letters at Iowa is for the twenty months from the end of Wallace's vice-presidential term through the confirmation struggle to his departure from Truman's cabinet. One-fifth of all the correspondence at Iowa is for the year 1945 alone. Subjects include Department of Commerce affairs and atomic energy policy. The volume of letters after 1946 decreases rapidly and remains low until 1963; perhaps the correspondence of Wallace's last two years, being the most recent, was the easiest to collect from his friends.

The Wallace papers at Iowa, except for the diary and the copy of Columbia's Oral History, were opened for research on January 4, 1971, and since then they have been used heavily by scholars and graduate students from all parts of the United States and from Canada, Eng-

land, Germany, and Norway. This use of the papers has been a gratifying indication that the cost and effort of arranging and indexing them was justified. Many scholars come to Iowa City, and the inquiries of others are handled by mail. The index has saved much time for researchers even before its publication.

Research topics of current interest that have already been explored to some extent in the Wallace papers include the origins of the Cold War, because Wallace was a major contemporary critic of the Truman administration's policy toward Russia and because of the failures of American policies in the 1960's; the Progressive Party campaign; the 1944 Democratic National Convention, where Wallace was sidetracked from becoming President on the death of Roosevelt; Roosevelt's China policy and Wallace's trip to China in 1944; the World War II economic front, especially rubber supplies; and some of the accusations of mysticism used to discredit Wallace, who had a deep and wide-ranging interest in religion and philosophy, as is obvious from his letters.<sup>18</sup>

Books and articles already published and drawing on the Wallace papers to a greater or lesser extent since their opening include a major study of Wallace's political role in the 1940's<sup>19</sup>; a history of the Truman administration with considerable attention paid to Wallace<sup>20</sup>; shorter accounts of Wallace in the early postwar years<sup>21</sup>; biographies of Glen Taylor, the Progressive Party candidate for vice-president in 1948,<sup>22</sup> and Cully Cobb, a Southern farm editor<sup>23</sup>; and a study of Paul Appleby as Wallace's principal assistant in the U.S. Department of Agriculture.<sup>24</sup> Unpublished dissertations in progress include a comprehensive study of Wallace's foreign policy views throughout his life.

Topics remain available for exploration in the Wallace papers. Some

---

<sup>18</sup> The Wallace papers suggest to me that the charges are not only simplistic but improbable; no easy labels, let alone false ones of mysticism or Communism, can explain Henry A. Wallace.

<sup>19</sup> Norman D. Markowitz, *The Rise and Fall of the People's Century: Henry A. Wallace and American Liberalism, 1941-1948* (New York: Free Press, 1973).

<sup>20</sup> Alonzo L. Hamby, *Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973).

<sup>21</sup> Torbjørn Sirevåg, "The Dilemma of the American Left in the Cold War Years: The Case of Henry A. Wallace," *Americana Norvegica*, 4 (1973), pp. 399-421; and Allen Yarnell, *Democrats and Progressives; The 1948 Presidential Election as a Test of Postwar Liberalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

<sup>22</sup> Peterson, *Prophet without Honor*. See footnote 7.

<sup>23</sup> Roy V. Scott and J. G. Shoalmire, *The Public Career of Cully A. Cobb: A Study in Agricultural Leadership* (Jackson: University and College Press of Mississippi, 1973).

<sup>24</sup> Gladys L. Baker, "'And To Act for the Secretary': Paul H. Appleby and the Department of Agriculture, 1933-1940," *Agricultural History*, 45 (October, 1971), pp. 235-258.



aspects of the application of genetics to agricultural production can be seen in his letters, from his early experiments with hybrid corn to his last years in strawberry improvement. Poultry, swine, and gladiolus breeding are also covered, along with Wallace's reaction to Lysenko, the Stalinist plant breeder. The business history of the Pioneer hybrid seed corn firm, of which Wallace was founder and first president, requires the use of his papers. There is room for scholarly research into *Wallaces' Farmer* as a leading Iowa farm paper. American farm economic difficulties and resulting political efforts in the 1920's and early 1930's have been extensively studied, but Henry A. Wallace's correspondence is particularly rich and relatively untouched for the period. Studies of his fellow Iowans, including Donald Murphy, Roswell Garst, and many Iowa State University faculty members, can make use of their correspondence with Wallace. The Iowa Democratic Party in the 1930's and 1940's and Latin American agricultural development are touched upon, and there is a lengthy correspondence with the writers Paul de Kruif and Russell Lord.

Some aspects of Wallace's life are absent from his papers, at least in those already open; perhaps the Oral History interview will fill in the gaps. Wallace was proud of his family traditions, and the papers at Iowa include a lengthy correspondence with one uncle, Daniel A. Wallace, but there are very few letters to or from his wife, children, brothers, or sisters on political, business, or any other subjects. Almost nothing is present here on his formal education or on his influence on Iowa State University after his graduation. There are also hints of an interest in the School of Religion at The University of Iowa. Wallace's move to Farvue Farm is but thinly documented. His long interest in nutrition is apparent but not developed. The reasons for his interest in Latin American agriculture and the background of his ideas while living in Des Moines need to be searched for elsewhere. His contacts and influences from 1946 to 1950 are incompletely provided. The impact of New Deal policies on rural poverty is ignored.

Although the Henry A. Wallace papers are not unexplored territory, and the significance of his life is well established, a biographer or other researcher can find much in the Wallace papers to add to our knowledge of the man and the events of his time.

# THE WALLACE PAPERS

*An Index to the Microfilm Editions of the Henry A. Wallace Papers  
in the University of Iowa Libraries, the Library of Congress  
and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library*



Earl M. Rogers  
*Editor*

Leslie W. Dunlap  
*Project Director*

*Volume I*

The University of Iowa Libraries Iowa City 1974

Prospective title page for the two-volume index to the microfilm editions of the Henry A. Wallace papers, soon to be published by the University of Iowa Libraries.