Guide to the Edith and Grace Abbott Papers 1870-1967
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Descriptive Summary

Identifier ICU.SPCL.EGABBOTT
Title Abbott, Edith and Grace. Papers
Date 1870-1967
Size 50 linear feet (100 boxes)
Repository Special Collections Research Center
University of Chicago Library
1100 East 57th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract Edith Abbott received her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1905 and was a resident of Hull House until 1920. She served as Associate Director of the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy at the University of Chicago and also served as dean. She died in 1957. Grace Abbott received her Ph.M. from the University of Chicago in 1909 and studied law at the University of Chicago Law School. In 1915 she became the first director of the newly organized Immigrant’s Protective League, and in 1917 was appointed to the Child Labor Division of the United States Children’s Bureau. She as Edith both served as professors of Public Welfare at the University of Chicago. Grace died in 1939. Papers of Edith Abbott contain professional and personal correspondence, lecture notes for courses taught at the University of Chicago School of Social Administration (SSA), speeches and articles, the draft of the unfinished biography of Grace Abbott, some administrative files and reports of SSA, biographical material, and photographs. Papers of Grace Abbott contain personal and professional correspondence; manuscripts of articles, speeches, and radio broadcasts; biographical material; invitations; scrapbooks relating to the United States Children’s Bureau; and pamphlets and memoranda on the Child Labor Amendment of 1924-25. Correspondents include Jane Addams, Sophonisba Breckinridge, Julia Lathrop, Frances Perkins, S.K. Ratcliffe, and Gifford Pinchot. Subjects include Hull House, child labor laws, child welfare, immigration, philanthropy, and public welfare administration. Also contains Abbott family papers, including correspondence, memorabilia, and photographs.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation
Biographical Note

Edith Abbott was born in Grand Island, Nebraska in 1876, daughter of the state’s first Lieutenant Governor, Othman A. Abbott. She received her A.B. from the University of Nebraska in 1901, her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1905, and spent the year 1906-1907 in post-graduate study at the University of London. Upon her return to Chicago in 1908, she became a resident of Hull House, where she remained until 1920. During this same period, 1908-1920, she served as Associate Director of the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy at the University of Chicago. In 1913, Edith Abbott formally joined the University of Chicago faculty on which she remained until 1953. From 1924 until 1942 she was Dean of the School of Social Service Administration, and from 1942 until 1953, Dean Emeritus. She died in 1957.

Grace Abbott was born two years after her sister Edith, in 1878. She received her Ph.B. from Grand Island College in 1898, her Ph.M. from the University of Chicago in 1909, and studied law at the University of Chicago Law School. She taught intermittently during this period, at the secondary-school level. In 1908 she also moved into Hull House, and there her interests were turned increasingly toward social problems. In 1915 she became the first Director of the newly organized Immigrant’s Protective League, and in 1917 she was appointed to a position in the Child Labor Division of the United States Children’s Bureau. Upon the resignation of Julia Lathrop, first Chief of the Bureau in 1921, Grace Abbott was appointed to that position. She held it until 1934. From 1934 until her death in 1939 she joined her sister in Chicago as Professor of Public Welfare at the University of Chicago and Editor of Social Service Review.

This collection reflects the close association of the Abbott sisters throughout their careers, as well as the central position which they held in the formative period of social service in the United States. Their correspondence and interests encompassed local, state, national, and international aspects of social welfare. Among their regular correspondents were Julia Lathrop, Jane Addams, Florence Kelly, Julius Rosenwald, Julius Mack, Frances Perkins, Lillian Wald, and Felix Frankfurter. A few of the many organizations in which one or the other took an active interest were the American Association of Social Workers, American Child Health Association, Better Homes in America, Chicago Recreation Committee, Child Labor Committee of Illinois, National Civil Service Reform League, Hull House, Immigrant’s Protective League, International Penal and Penitentiary Commission, National Conference on Social Work, Social Science Research Committee, Twentieth Century Fund, United States Children’s Bureau, and others. Edith’s interests were centered on the status of women in industry and the establishment of high professional standards in social work education. Grace Abbott’s career was largely devoted to the conditions of child labor and to maternal and child health matters. The sisters shared an early interest in the problems of the immigrant, and later on in the relief and public assistance programs of the New Deal.

Scope Note
The collection has been divided into four series: the professional papers of Edith Abbott, the professional papers of Grace Abbott, the personal papers of both, which consists to a great extent of Abbott family correspondence, and Addenda.

Within these large categories, a more detailed arrangement has been made. Edith Abbott’s professional papers consist of financial and legal documents, correspondence, press notices, speeches and articles, and lecture notes for social service courses at the University of Chicago, material on the American Association of Schools of Social Work, and reports and records relating to the School of Social Service Administration.

Grace Abbott’s professional papers consist of biographical material and memorials, speaking invitations, social invitations and requests for articles, manuscripts of articles and speeches, correspondence and press response to the proposal of Grace Abbott for Secretary of Labor in 1930, lecture notes, correspondence with students and reports concerning social service administration. It also contains correspondence arranged alphabetically by individual or organization name, general correspondence arranged chronologically, and scrapbooks on the history of the Children’s Bureau, Children’s Bureau publicity, pamphlets and memoranda on the Child Labor Amendment of 1924-25, and a collection of radio talks on the Children’s Bureau.

The personal papers of Grace and Edith Abbott contain correspondence between the sisters and with other members of their family, personal memorabilia, and general personal correspondence with a number of people.

Series IV consists of an addenda to the Papers. Subseries I contains papers relating to Edith Abbott. The general correspondence is largely of a social nature -- including condolences on the death of Grace -- with scattered letters concerning professional matters and the School of Social Service Administration. Prominent among her correspondents are Jane Addams, Sophonisba Breckinridge, and S. K. Ratcliffe. Also present is family correspondence, dated 1897-1950, replete with family news and local gossip for Grand Island, Nebraska, and a variety of biographical materials -- mostly clippings. The professional papers consist of Edith’s lectures on philanthropy, a series of articles on social welfare subjects, and drafts of two unpublished monographs.

Grace Abbott’s papers in Subseries II are arranged in a manner corresponding to those of Edith in the first series. Here among the general correspondence are filed Grace’s extensive correspondence with Frances Perkins and Katharine Lenroot concerning the Federal Child Labor Law and the proposed reorganization and operation of the Children’s Bureau. The family correspondence includes a body of letters addressed to both sisters as well as Grace and Edith’s correspondence with each other. The biographical materials are dominated by the typed draft of Edith’s unpublished biography of her sister, “Grace Abbott: Her Sister’s Story of Her Life and Work.” Closing the series is a small group of professional papers including articles and policy papers.

Subseries III consists of correspondence of Charlotte Abbott, the only niece of Grace and Edith, and daughter of O. A. Abbott, Jr. The letters are almost exclusively of a personal nature and
include extensive correspondence with her father, two aunts, and family friend, Sophonisba Breckinridge.

The final subseries is composed of correspondence, memorabilia, and photographs relating to the remaining members of the Abbott family. Again the material is largely personal, although clippings and correspondence concerning the political careers of O. A. Abbott, Sr. and O.A. Abbott, Jr. -- respectively first lieutenant governor of Nebraska and mayor of Grand Island -- are present. Mrs. Abbott’s (Elizabeth Griffin Abbott) correspondence includes several items concerning the suffrage movement, while that of younger brother, Arthur, contains numerous condolences upon the deaths of Grace and Edith. A large collection of family portraits and snapshots complete this family archive. It should be noted that all photographs of Grace and Edith Abbott were removed and are located in the Archival Photographic files.

**Related Resources**

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html

**Subject Headings**

- Abbott, Edith
- Abbott, Grace
- Addams, Jane
- Breckinridge, Sophonisba Preston
- Frankfurter, Felix
- Kelly, Florence
- Lathrop, Julia Clifford
- Mack, Julian
- Perkins, Frances
- Pinchott, Gifford
- Ratcliffe, Samuel Kerkham
- Rosenwald, Julius
- Wald, Lillian
- Hull House (Chicago, IL)
- Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy. Records
- United States. Children's Bureau
- University of Chicago. Graduate School of Social Service Administration
- University of Chicago. School of Social Service Administration
- Child labor -- Law and legislation
- Social reformers -- United States
- Social service -- Illinois -- Chicago -- History
- Social work education
- Women social reformers -- United States

**INVENTORY**

**Series I: Edith Abbott**
Subseries 1: Personal Papers

Box 1
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  Financial and household correspondence and memoranda

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Folder 2
  Bank advices, cheques, receipts and statements

Box 1
Folder 3
  Bills, receipts and statements, other than bank

Box 1
Folder 4
  Expenditures, income and income tax

Box 1
Folder 5
  Legal affairs

Box 1
Folder 6
  Breckenridge Estate

Box 1
Folder 7
  Engagement, memo, and address books and photographs

Box 1
Folder 7a
  Notebook, 1930s

Box 1
Folder 8
  General correspondence, 1904-1905

Box 1
Folder 9
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Box 1
Folder 10
  General correspondence, 1907-1912

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Folder 11
  General correspondence, 1913-1923

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Folder 12
  General correspondence, 1924-1931

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  General correspondence, 1932
General correspondence, 1933-1935

Box 2
Folder 3
    General correspondence, 1936-1948 and undated

Box 2
Folder 4
    Essays, poems and songbooks saved by Edith Abbott

Box 2
Folder 5
    Programs, invitations and cards, memorial to Edith

Box 2
Folder 6
    Personal correspondence, Abbott, Arthur G. to Edith Abbott, 1931-1950

Box 2
Folder 7

Box 2
Folder 8
    Personal correspondence, Abbott, Edith to Grace Abbott

Box 2
Folder 9
    Personal correspondence, A to K

Box 2
Folder 10
    Personal correspondence, L to Z

Box 2
Folder 11
    Personal correspondence, with Service personnel in World War II

Box 2
Folder 12
    Personal correspondence, Unidentified, inc. some photos

Box 2
Folder 13
    Personal correspondence, General family correspondence

Box 2
Folder 14
    Personal correspondence, Early personal records and memorabilia

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Professional correspondence, Addams, Jane with Edith Abbott

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Box 3
Folder 8  
Professional correspondence, Kelly, Florence with Edith Abbott

Box 3
Folder 9  
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Folder 10  
Professional correspondence, Laski, Harold J. with Edith Abbott

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Folder 11  
Professional correspondence, Lathrop, Julia with Edith Abbott

Box 3
Folder 12  
Professional correspondence, Lenroot, Katharine with Edith Abbott

Box 3
Folder 13  
Professional correspondence, M

Box 3
Folder 14  
Professional correspondence, Mack, Julian with Edith Abbott

Box 3
Folder 15  
Professional correspondence, N to R, inc. S. K. Ratcliffe

Box 3
Folder 16  
Professional correspondence, Rosenwald, Julius with Edith Abbott

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Folder 17  
Professional correspondence, S to U

Box 3
Folder 18
Professional correspondence, United States government agencies

Box 3
Folder 19
  Professional correspondence, V to Z

Box 4
Folder 1
  Letters to the editor and editorial comment by Edith Abbott

Box 4
Folder 2
  Organizations with which Edith Abbott was affiliated: American Association of Schools of Social Work

Box 4
Folder 3
  Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy

Box 4
Folder 4
  Chicago, University of, Press

Box 4
Folder 5
  Chicago, University of, internal correspondence other than Press

Box 4
Folder 6
  Emergency Committee to Save the Children's Bureau

Box 4
Folder 7
  Hull House

Box 4
Folder 8
  Immigrants' Protective League

Box 4
Folder 9
  Local Community Research Committee

Box 4
Folder 10
  Mid-century White House Conference on Children and Youth

Box 4
Folder 11
  Morrison Home for the Aged

Box 4
Folder 12
  National Conference of Social Work

Box 4
Folder 13
  National Conference on Children and Youth

Box 4
Folder 14
National Fair Rent Committee
Box 4
Folder 15
   National Jewish Hospital
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Folder 16
   South Dakota Children's Aid
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Folder 1
   Press notices of Edith Abbott (by date)
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Folder 3
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Folder 4
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   Speeches before the National Conference of Social Work
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Folder 6
   Book and article notes and drafts: Crime and the Foreign Born, text
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   The Effect of War on Crime and Destitution in Great Britain, text of Table of Contents and Chapters III to V and XI
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American Philanthropy lecture notes, Child Welfare, II

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American Philanthropy lecture notes, Crime and Punishment II

Box 6
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American Philanthropy lecture notes, Development of Private Welfare Organization

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Folder 6
American Philanthropy lecture notes, Development of Public Welfare Organization

Box 6
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American Philanthropy lecture notes, Education (except of the Handicapped)

Box 6
Folder 8
American Philanthropy lecture notes, General; Housing

Box 6
Folder 9
American Philanthropy lecture notes, Institutional Care (including Education of the Handicapped)

Box 6
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American Philanthropy lecture notes, Labor Problems and Legislation

Box 6
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American Philanthropy lecture notes, Leading Figures in American Philanthropy - I (A to K)

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American Philanthropy lecture notes, Public Health and Hospitals

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Folder 5-7

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English Philanthropy lecture notes, Crime and Punishment

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English Philanthropy lecture notes, Family Allowances

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English Philanthropy lecture notes, General (Intellectual Background)

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Folder 5
English Philanthropy lecture notes, General (Social and Economic Background) I-IV

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English Philanthropy lecture notes, General (Political and Administrative Background) I-III

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English Philanthropy lecture notes, Housing; Institutional Care; Labor Legislation

Box 8
Folder 10
English Philanthropy lecture notes, Leading Figures in English Philanthropy - A to J

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Folder 11
English Philanthropy lecture notes, Leading Figures in English Philanthropy, K to Z

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Public Welfare Administration class materials, SSA 354, 357, 369, 395

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Pamphlets and articles by Others, Public Health; Poor Law Administration
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In Memorium

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   • Angels and Amazons: Inez Haynes Irwin;
   • Child Health Recovery: Transient Youths;
   • Child Labor under the NRA (Radio Talk)

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   Mss. Articles and Speeches, 1934 (I)
   • What About Mothers’ Pensions Now?
   • Recent Trends in Mothers’ Aid
   • Radio Talk on Tuberculosis Association
   • Excerpts of Address at National Women’s Trade Union League Nebraska
   • My Message to You
   • Radio Talk, Jan 2, 1934 (looking to the coming year)
   • Effect of the N.R.A. Codes on Child Labor

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   Mss. Articles and Speeches, 1934 and 1935
   • Child Labor in 1934 (in Encyclopaedia Britannica Yearbook)
• Child Health Needs Close Watching During These Times
• Children’s Code Commissions
• The Economic Basis of Child Welfare
• Why a Child Labor Amendment Now?
• The Child and the State
• The Welfare of Rural Children
• The United States Children’s Bureau
• Address to Child Welfare League of America
• Memorandum on Relief and Repatriation of Foreign Minors
• Article on Child Labor and Cotton Code
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• Dinner Remarks about Children’s Courts
• "The Forgotten Child in America” (1935)

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• The Juvenile Court and a Community Program for Treating and Preventing Delinquency
• Governmental Assistance of Ec. Distress
• Social Services a Public Responsibility
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• Preliminary Outline for Curriculum in Social Insurance
• How May Administrative Skill Combined with Professional Competence be Secured for State and Local Public Welfare Services?
• Business Women's Responsibility to All Women who Work and to Humanity
• Relief Needs, Survey, July, 1936

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• Radio Talk on Social Security
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• Radio Talk, Political
• Political Article offered to the Maroon (but not printed)
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• The Social Security Act and Relief

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  • Safeguarding American Children
  • Children’s Bureau
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  • Chicago Employment Agency and the Immigrant Worker
  • Case Work Responsibility of Juvenile Courts
  • The Child-Labor Amendment - I
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  • The Forgotten Child in America
  • The Juvenile Courts
  • Dependent Children - prevention of dependency
  • Various untitled including 19.35 address to Annual Meeting of Illinois
  • Children’s Home and Aid Society
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• Notes on J. Lathrop’s appointment to Children’s Bureau
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• Review of 500 Delinquent Women
• Speech 1935 International Labor Conference
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Diary-notebook of Grace Abbott - European trip, 1911. Observations of social and economic conditions in Austria, Poland and Eastern European countries

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Publications de la Ligue Internationale des Femmes pour la Paix et la Liberte, pamphlet number 7: "Pour un Nouveau Regime International"

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Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, "Fifteenth Report," April 1st, 1929-March 31st, 1930

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Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, pamphlet, "The Josephine Butler Centenary, 1828-1928"
Commission Internationale Penale et Penitentiare, pamphlet: "Programme of Questions to be discussed at the Twelfth International Penal and Penitentiary Congress, Rome, 1940

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Congres Penal et Penententiare International de Berlin, 1935, pamphlet: "Rapport presente par Mlle Grace Abbott"

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National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief, pamphlet: "Report of our Visit to Spain (April, 1937, "by Katherine Atholl, Rachel Crowdy, Eleanor Rathbone, Ellen Wilkinson"

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American Friends of Spanish Democracy, pamphlet, "Spain"

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Spanish Embassy, Washington, 1937, pamphlet, "Spain's War of Independence"

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The Interracial Committee of the New Jersey Conference of Social Work Pamphlet, "The Negro - New Jersey's Twentieth Citizen"

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International Conference of Social Work, pamphlet, "Report on Schools of Social Work"

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Edith Abbott bound scrapbook of notes, clippings and correspondence concerning the problem of Federal relief in the United States

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League to Enforce Peace, pamphlet by William E. Barton, "Satisfying Old Sam Adams"

The Child and the State, by Grace Abbott (University of Chicago Press, 1938) annotated, but probably not Grace Abbott’s hand with advertisement and review

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• "The Effect on War on Social Problems"
• Address to The Graduate Club (ca. 1925) on women in graduate school
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• "Backgrounds and Foregrounds in Education for Social Work"
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• "The Illinois Poor Law"
• Address to the Unitarian Church, 1940, on social work
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• An address on Social Security for the family

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• "Abolish the Means Test for Public Assistance"
• A note on Social Security
• Address on the social insurance system of England
• Address on settlement laws
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Diploma, Grace Abbott, Ph.M., University of Chicago, 1909
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Passport, Grace Abbott, 1911
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Certificate, Grace Abbott, as Chief of the Children’s Bureau will serve as representative on a committee which is to investigate the traffic in women and children, held in Geneva, Switzerland, August 21, 1930
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Honorary degree, Grace Abbott, University of New Hampshire, 1932
Box 99
Certificate, Grace Abbott, Professor of Public Welfare, University of Chicago, designated a delegate to the 23rd session of the International Labor Conference, Geneva, Switzerland, June 3, 1937
Box 99
Certificate, Grace Abbott appointed Chief of the Children’s Bureau, Department of Labor, by Warren G. Harding, President, 1946
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Diploma, Edith Abbott, Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1905
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Honorary degree, Sophonisba P. Breckinridge, Wellesley College, 1888
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Diploma, Sophonisba P. Breckinridge, Ph.M., University of Chicago, 1897
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Statement qualifying Sophonisba P. Breckinridge to practice law in Chicago, Illinois, 1897?
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Diploma, Sophonisba P. Breckinridge, Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1901
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Honorary degree, Sophonisba P. Breckinridge, Oberlin College, 1919
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Survey Associates, Inc., The Survey Award, for imaginative and constructive contribution to social work, Edith Abbott, 1951
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Postcard, Walter Friedlander to Sophonisba P. Breckinridge, 1940