Register of the Secours français records

Finding aid prepared by Hoover Institution Archives Staff.
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434 Galvez Mall
Stanford University
Stanford, CA, 94305-6010
(650) 723-3563
hooverarchives@stanford.edu
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Title: Secours français records
Date (inclusive): 1939-1945
Collection Number: 63023
Contributing Institution: Hoover Institution Archives
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 2 manuscript boxes (0.8 linear feet)
Abstract: The collection consists of correspondence, memoranda, writings, and the financial records of Le Secours Français, an American relief organization founded by Mrs. Seton Porter during World War II to aid the civilian population of France.
Physical Location: Hoover Institution Archives
Creator: Secours français.
Access
Collection is open for research.
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Secours français records, [Box number], Hoover Institution Archives.
Acquisition Information
Acquired by the Hoover Institution Archives in 1963.
Accruals
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Biographical/Historical Note
The organization Secours Français was an American relief organization founded by Mrs. Seton Porter during World War II to aid the civilian population of France. Mrs. Seton Porter (maiden name: Frederica Berwind) married Henry Herman Harjes, a partner at Morgan Harjes & Co. in Paris, in 1911. During the First World War, H.H. Harjes was a chief representative of the American Red Cross in France and founder of an American ambulance section. Mrs. Seton Porter, then Mrs. Harjes, also aided in the war effort by establishing a military hospital named La Cantine de la Malmaison in September 1914 that operated until the end of the war in 1918. For her efforts, she was decorated by the French army with the Legion d'honneur and the Croix de Guerre with Palm. H. H. Harjes died in 1926, leaving Frederica with a desire to aid war-torn France, as she had done with her late husband. She subsequently married Mr. Seton Porter in 1936, three years before she would found Le Paquet au Front, the organization that would later become Le Secours Français. Mrs. Seton Porter acted as chairman for the organization, with Miss Gladys Lillie as her executive secretary. Mrs. Seton Porter died in June 1954.
Scope and Content of Collection
The collection consists of correspondence, memoranda, writings, and the financial records of Le Secours Français, an American relief organization founded by Mrs. Seton Porter during World War II. Mrs. Seton Porter originally founded the organization in New York City under the name of Le Paquet au Front in September 1939 to send packages to soldiers in the French military. In September 1940, after the fall of France, the organization was renamed Le Secours Français and shifted its focus to providing wartime relief to French women and children. The collection’s contents describe several coordinated efforts to fundraise for the organization through radio, magazine, and other means. The relief effort of Le Secours Français was administered by the American Friends Service Committee (the Quakers) in unoccupied France until America’s entry into World War II barred organizations from sending relief to areas considered to be enemy lines, as several of Mrs. Seton Porter’s letters to donors demonstrate. As far as the documentation reveals, the organization remained active until 1945. Notable documents in this collection include a radio broadcast by Howard Kershner in efforts to fundraise for the organization; the pamphlet “Before it is Too Late,” an appeal by Le Secours Français to help the children and mothers of France; coordinated efforts to send clothing, coal, and food to the Islands of Saint Pierre et Miquelon; and correspondence with the U.S. Department of State, which at the time regulated relief organization’s raising funds for aid in belligerent
countries.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
International relief.
World War, 1939-1945--Civilian relief.
World War, 1939-1945--France.
World War, 1939-1945--United States.

Correspondence, 1939-1945
General, 1939-1945
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