These memoirs are not part of the book Messersmith began dictating after retirement but were evidently written during the earlier part of his career. They were previously filed in the section of the papers labeled Box X, Addresses and Miscellaneous.
FIRST DAYS IN THE SERVICE.

If I were to be asked why I entered the Consular Service and wished to give a really honest answer I would only be able to talk in generalities. As a boy I had eagerly devoured all sorts of books on adventure and had revelled particularly in those in which the scene of action lay outside of the United States. Europe particularly from the days of my early boyhood for some reason or other held a particular charm for me. I can find no reason other than this except that I was an omnivorous reader and at the age of eleven had already absorbed every one of Jane Austin's novels, Thackeray's, Sterne, as well as those of Scott and Dickens and the other English novelists more usually read by our young people. Probably my imagination was very strongly stimulated for in any event that which was distant and remote always held a peculiar charm for me. When the stern necessity of making a living compelled me to cut off my work in school I turned naturally to teaching, which I had already determined to follow, but during all the years from 1900 to 1914 there was in the back of my mind that if I ever did do anything else it would be to enter our Foreign Service.

I was so thoroughly absorbed over and interested in school work that I had no idea of changing my profession until in the latter part of 1913 I began to think seriously of marriage and found that even though I had been able to make satisfactory progress in the
teaching world, the conditions were such that there was little chance of making even a modestly comfortable living. I therefore with the assistance of Senator Dupont took the examinations for the Consular Service but was informed that I had failed. I was not surprised as I had had no preparation whatever for the examination. Just at that time a turning point came in my professional work and I was offered the superintendency of schools in Washington County, Maryland. This was one of the most eagerly sought positions in the school world at that time as Washington County was then one of the richest counties in the United States, and the superintendency involved as well immediate charge of the schools in Hagerstown. The salary offered was a particularly interesting one and more than I could hope to make in the Consular Service. Other positions were offered me at the same time, all of them very flattering to me at the time, but I had definitely decided that some of my ideals had to go by the board and that it would be necessary to change my profession as my future wife would never be happy as the wife of a schoolmaster. Her independence of spirit and action was such that it would have been impossible except with a great struggle for her to accommodate herself to that life, and frankly I myself was getting rather tired of the constant struggle with ignorant and prejudiced school boards.

I therefore took the examinations for the diplomatic service in December 1913 or January 1914 and shortly afterwards was informed that out of some thirty of us, nine
of us had passed. I was told to proceed to Washington where I went immediately to see Mr. Moore, who was then the Counselor of the State Department. I remember very well that there were in the ante-room to his office some ten or twelve people but when my card was taken in Mr. Moore saw me at once. I had lived with his father, Dr. Moore in Felton, Delaware, for several years as well as with his father's maiden sister. I had become very much attached to the old people and Dr. Moore's father at that time was already past eighty. Mr. Moore felt some interest in me as well in view of the fact that he knew that I was engaged to marry the daughter of one of his best friends, Colonel Mustard of Lewes, and her uncle, former Governor Tunnel of Delaware, was one of his most intimate friends of long standing. It was for these reasons that Mr. Moore received me so kindly and gave me the good advice presently to be set forth. In this connection it is interesting to note that it was through my wife's uncle, Governor Tunnel, that Mr. Moore really started out on his career with the State Department. When Mr. Bayard was Secretary of State he and Governor Tunnel were intimately associated in many ways and were close friends. He one day complained to Governor Tunnel of the fact that he really had no dependable person in the Department of State to do certain work that he had to have done, - that he needed for this work a young lawyer. Mr. Tunnel suggested that he take with him to Washington John Bassett Moore of Felton who was then just starting out as a young lawyer in Wilmington, and who not having very much practice would probably be interested in this
opportunity. Mr. Moore was engaged by Secretary Bayard and in this way became interested in the work of the Department and in our foreign relations. I relate this incident principally to show how it is that our fates are determined, by the sheerest chance, and by influences usually entirely outside of ourselves. It was this simply suggestion of Governor Tunnel that started out Mr. Moore on a career for which he had had no previous inclination and from an humble clerk to the Secretary of State he was to rise to the position of Counselor and Under-secretary and later to the brilliant judge of the International Court at the Hague, and the writer of many books on foreign relations and international law. In fact he became the foremost authority in the United States on international law.

I can remember still with what awe I came into the presence of Mr. Moore, who asked me to sit down and his first words were to congratulate me on what he called the splendid way in which I had passed the examination. He proceeded to tell me that it was the Department's intention to appoint me as third secretary at Vienna, which in those days was considered a splendid post, but he almost stunned me by the ending of his sentence with the words "but you are not going and you are not going into the diplomatic service". He then started to explain to me that his interest in me was leading him to try to keep me from making a mistake. He told me at length of how there were plenty of young foreign diplomats in Washington who were leading a life which in his opinion no self-respecting young man wished
to lead. He said they were for the most part men without money who had asked for Washington as a post in order that they might find a wealthy wife, that most of them simply lived in one room and spent all their money on their clothes, that they sometimes bought their own breakfast but depended upon the rest of the world for their invitations to lunch and dinner, that they never spent any money in returning entertainment and that on the whole they had little to do. He said that in our own diplomatic service it was a fairly good career for a man who had plenty of money and who did not care for business and who wanted a respectable way of passing his time without having to do very much work. He insisted that from what he knew of me it was not the kind of life that would suit me, and that it would not suit my future wife as well. It must have taken him at least an hour to tell me his story and several times I was ready to leave but he insisted on my being seated again, and when I referred to the people outside waiting to see him he replied "all those people are waiting there to get something and it is far more important that I give you this time to save you from making a mistake that may spoil a lifetime".

When I asked Mr. Moore as to what he thought I should do he informed me that what I wanted was to enter the consular service which really presented a career for a man who wished to work and it was arranged that I should take the examinations which would take place shortly. I passed these examinations and was informed in June that I had been appointed consul at
Fort Erie. This was a post in class 9 of the then consular service at a salary of $2000 a year, and it was not particularly encouraging as even in the teaching profession I was in a position to earn at least three times that sum. I shall always remember a conversation which I had with Mr. Carr, who then had the title of Director of the Consular Service, about the matter. I went to see him and told him that I was undecided as to whether I should take this step or not. I explained to him briefly that I had made my career in another profession and had no desire to change for one in which advancement could only be secured by constant exercise of political and friendly pressure. I asked him whether in his opinion it was possible for a man to make his way in the consular service under the then existing conditions without constantly being after his friends to push him along. I remember how nonplussed he was by the question and could easily see that it was not often that neophyte addressed him in that fashion or put such searching questions. I shall always remember too his reply that he "thought in my case that I would be able to make my way and thought that I would be safe in entering the service". It was because of what I had heard of Mr. Carr and of his unselfish devotion to the consular service that I finally decided to take the risk and accepted the appointment.

In those days it was customary for the class of newly appointed consuls to undergo a week's instruction in the Department. My own class, which consisted of seven men, was
under the instruction of Consul General Fuller who has since resigned from the service. After this proof instruction which covered in a hurried way the regulations, I was told to proceed to my post at Fort Erie via Toronto, at which post I was supposed to spend another week in order to gain in a consulate some little experience of the actual way in which the routine work was done. My wife and I proceeded to Toronto and after settling ourselves in a hotel I went to call on Dr. J. Drayer, our consul in that city. I found the consulate in a modern and centrally located office building and on the whole very businesslike and attractive in appearance. Dr. Drayer, a man well advanced in years who had formerly been the head of a small college in Virginia and a man of extremely gentle and courteous manner.

In those days no particular preparation was required of a man before he entered the Service. The examinations it is true, both the written and the oral, were for the purpose of determining whether a man possessed the fundamental qualifications and equipment necessary to become an officer, but no professional knowledge of any kind was necessary. The men who entered the service as a rule had some fair knowledge of maritime and international law but no knowledge whatever of consular practice and of what made up the daily work of a consul. I had probably read more widely than most of the young men who go into the Service but I had absolutely no knowledge of what the actual daily routine of a consulate was.
It took but a few hours in the consulate at Toronto to convince me that Dr. Drayer was not in a position to help me very much. His training as a college professor and as a minister of the gospel and as head of a small college in Virginia had not been particularly good training for the consular service which he entered very late in life. I had been for fourteen years in charge of various schools in Delaware and had had no contact with the Department of State or with our foreign relations in any way. We were equally babes in the wood. But if I did not learn anything from Dr. Drayer I did enjoy the pleasant contact with him and his wife in the charming home which they had established in Toronto. They were both people of fine culture and received my wife and me into their home from the very first day. I did find in the office at Toronto a foreign clerk who was a fine example of the many foreign clerks whom we have in the service. He was a young man of much intelligence and capacity and I would not be surprised if he had been running the Toronto office for a good many years without much assistance from the consul as he was running it during the time that I was there. He knew his business and he initiated me during the first week into the mysteries of invoices and all the numerous certificates related thereto as well as made me familiar with some of the many details of the daily work of a consular office. I am sorry that I do not remember his name as he long ago left the Toronto office for the simple reason that even yet we are not able to pay foreign clerks over $1000 a year and in most countries this is entirely inadequate to keep the right kind of men in the consulates.
The actual outbreak of the war came while we were in Toronto and on the morning that the news arrived I found Mr. Drayer in his office absolutely in collapse, and all he could say was "my whole house has fallen on my head" and "this cannot be so, the Lord will not permit it". When he realized that the war was a grim reality he was incapacitated from any real work for days. He was an immensely good man who had lived his religion all his life and he conceived that it was impossible that human beings in this day should actually engage in war. I am rather afraid that in those days the Toronto office which actually became a rather busy one, probably busier than it ever had been, was very badly run for its chief was entirely out of current and it was left to me to run it. We did the best we could and received the many visitors who came on important matters in those days, and fortunately by the time that I had to leave for my own post Dr. Drayer had somewhat recovered his equilibrium if not his serenity, and I am sure carried on very well during the remainder of his stay in that city.

It was during our stay in Toronto that we saw the Princess Pat Regiment marching down the main street of the city on their way to the railway station to embark for Europe. It was a magnificent spectacle, all the more interesting and stirring because we like the Canadians were not accustomed to marching soldiers and stirring military music. When we saw the flower of Canada's manhood and intellect and business marching down the street, little did we think that within a few
months this regiment was to be practically annihilated in the fighting around Ypres. Later at my own post at Fort Erie I recall what a pall fell over us all when the news of the great disaster which befell that regiment reached us.