Subject: Anthony Drexel Biddle.

It was while we were stationed in Vienna that we first knew Anthony Drexel Biddle. I had known of him and his family for years as I was born in Pennsylvania near Philadelphia, and while I was Principal of the schools in Newark, Delaware, in the early 1900's I spent many week-ends in Philadelphia and frequented the Southern Club on Rittenhouse Square. Incidentally, I think I was perhaps the only member of the Southern Club who was not born below the Mason-Dixon Line as this was one of the requirements, although I think they did take in some people from Delaware. It was probably because I was living in Newark that they took me into the Club and I formed many pleasant associations there. I found there many friends of Biddle and he was supposed to be a good deal of a playboy. He was interested in sports, in polo, and was not participating actively in any of the family interests.

It was some time in 1935, I will have to consult my records for the exact time, that I received a telephone call one day at the Chancery in Vienna from Biddle. He said that he and his wife were in Vienna for some time purely for pleasure. They were making a trip to various places in Europe, they would like to come in and call on us. I told him that we would be very glad to see them and asked them for lunch. My wife and I found them to be charming people. He is a man of an extraordinarily attractive personality; his wife was a charming woman, I believe from California, his second wife. We liked both of them from the start and, as they were going to be in Vienna for some time, I told Biddle that we were having some luncheons and dinners during the time that they were going to be there and we would be very glad to have them come in if they would not be too bored meeting some of the people in the government. Biddle said that they would be enchanted and they came to a number of luncheons and dinners at the house.
One day Tony stayed after the guests had left and he said that he had a personal matter which he wished to take up with me and he did it with a good deal of hesitation. He said that he hoped that I would not think he was ridiculous in advancing the thought he was about to propose. He said that recently he had had a desire to do something in the diplomatic service. He had enjoyed meeting the people at our home in Vienna and he had come to the conclusion that he would really like to enter the Service in one way or another. He wanted to know how that would be possible. I explained to him that because of his age it would be difficult for him, if not impossible, in fact impossible to enter as a career foreign service officer. The only thing for him to do would be to get an appointment as a chief of mission. He asked me if I thought that would be possible. He went on to say that he did not want to appear ridiculous to me and that he hoped that his thoughts and ambitions in this direction did not appear to me to be such. I told him that on the contrary I thought that he would make an excellent chief of mission. He naturally had a good deal to learn, but he was a man of wide travel and I could see that he was really interested in the political situation and I saw many reasons why he would make a good chief of mission. Certainly he was a better chief of mission than some of the men who were getting appointments to such posts. He was really profuse in his gratitude for what I said. He said he expected me to discourage him. He said he was pleased that I thought he would really be able to do something in a job of that kind. I told him that he could follow the same procedure that many others did, that is, of making a contribution to the Party and I could not see any reason why in his case he would not be given a post. He told me he was going to do it.

I heard nothing for some weeks, in fact, several months, when I heard of his appointment as Ambassador to Poland. I was pleased. I
knew that he would bring a real interest and loyalty to the job. When I was in the Department, I found that his telegrams from Poland were extremely interesting. It was quite obvious that he had learned fast. He was doing a good job. In those days the appropriations of the Department of State were extremely small. What we could spend on telegrams was very limited. Biddle liked to report by telegram; he did this because the courier service from Poland to Washington was slow and he was eager to serve the Department, and the President and the Secretary, as effectively as possible. His telegrams, however, were too long and sometimes could have been conveyed by dispatch or by letter. Biddle was very anxious that the President should see his telegrams and as the President was very much interested in developments in Poland we sent him a good many of Biddle's telegrams which seemed most interesting.

One day I was told that it would be advisable for me to write to Biddle to cut down the length of his telegrams. I realized it was quite the proper thing to do but I wrote the letter with a great deal of hesitation because I did not wish to do anything to curb the zeal and interest which Biddle was showing. I therefore wrote him a very courteous friendly letter and gave the indication to him without indicating in any way that I had been asked to write him in this sense. I think that in spite of the kind tenor of my letter and his being understanding of my letter that he was a bit hurt, but I've always felt that this was to his credit. During the war Biddle was stationed in London as our Ambassador to various governments in exile in London. He did an excellent job there. The son of one of my friends, Jimmy Heineman, was one of his aids. Later Biddle did a good job in Paris. I saw him last in Mexico City in September 1954 when he came with General Ridgeway, then Chief of Staff, for the September 16th celebrations in Mexico City. I found him the same lively, vivacious, courteous man he had always been.
For me it has always been a satisfaction to think that I may have had a little to do with Biddle entering the service of our government. Up until the time he entered the service of our government in a diplomatic mission he had followed his inclinations and led a life which had no fixed objective. His entering the service gave him a new zest in life and he found the thing he wished to do. Although he had no preoccupations with regard to money and being in the government service cost him from the outset a good deal of money, the fact that he had no preoccupations with respect to money made it easier for him to do his job.

This is not the place in these notes to speak of this matter at length, but I may note here that I was one of those who always felt that the President should not be limited to the members of the career service for designations as Ambassador and Minister. Naturally I was definitely of the conviction that where men had risen in the career service to the point where they showed that they were able to perform adequately the duties of chief of mission that they should be given preference and always preference above political appointees. On the other hand, I know only too well that there are times when the Department is not in the position to name foreign service officers of career whom it knows will adequately fill certain posts. There are times. This is, therefore, no reason for recommending a mediocre officer or one whom the Department does not believe will adequately do the job. I, therefore, have always, although attached to the career as I believe few have been, advocated the idea that the President should have full freedom in determining whom he will appoint as chiefs of mission. There are times when a businessman or a professional man or someone of outstanding capacity, who has had no connection with our diplomatic
work in the past, may make the best appointment to certain posts. I do not and have never believed that the President should use these designations as chief of mission for paying off political debts. All Presidents have done that. It is quite understandable; but the fact that they use these positions at times to pay off political debts is no reason why the power of the President, under the Constitution, to name ambassadors and ministers as he sees fit should be limited. Some of the best men whom we have had as chiefs of mission have not been trained in the career. Tony Biddle was one of these. I will refer to this general matter in another place in these notes.