Purpose: To present the role of diplomatic and military mail between the US government officials and their counter-part Allied nations in telling the story of how US got engaged in World War I to its active role in achieving the Armistice Treaty and the negotiation of the Versailles Peace Treaty when the US and Britain laid the foundations for the formation of League of Nations. Some of the letters contained in the envelopes presented here bring out the personal diplomacy conducted primarily between the participants at the Versailles Peace Treaty conference and Col. House, the lead member of the US delegation to the Versailles conference. The presentation also captures lesser known events at Versailles such as the “Inter-Allied Games” (a cooperative efforts of the US Army and the American YMCA) in Paris. Signing of Versailles treaty on 28 June 1918 is reflected by the mail and souvenir covers mailed on that day from the Versailles Congress post office. Presentation ends with examples of aftermath of Versailles Peace Treaty that included the mail from the American and British diplomats who played an important role in League of Nations including the first Secretary General of League of Nations, Sir Eric Drummond in 1920.

Background: This exhibit is primarily based on an extensive correspondence to Col. Edward M. House, a close advisor to President Wilson during WWI and an effective leader of the US Commission to Negotiate Peace at the Versailles Peace Conference in 1918-1919. Since he had the direct access to President Wilson, most leaders of Allied nations extensively dealt with him which resulted in voluminous correspondence. The story presented here is based on the original envelopes addressed to Col. House along with some of the copies of letters in these envelopes which are archived at the Yale University Library. This presentation could not have been possible were it not for the fact that each envelope bears pencil notation of the name and date of the sender. Both the Yale librarians and a private researcher, April Link are credited in locating the correspondence containing in a number of the envelopes presented here.

ORGANIZATION

Section I: Mail delivery methods
Section II: Pre-Armistice Treaty
Section III: Armistice to Versailles Peace Treaty
Section IV: Post Versailles Peace Treaty

COL. HOUSE LEFT OF PRES. WILSON AT VERSAILLES

Keys Within the Exhibit

Letter Sources: Yale Library Archive of Col. House Papers (YALE)

Items of exceptional importance are framed within a red box.

Supporting reference is available using a phone to scan the QR codes within in the exhibit.