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ONE PAGE IN THE LIFE OF A PRESIDENT

by

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Most American citizens have a general curiosity about the financial status and spending habits of our presidents. Details of their early, formative years of life, however, are generally limited to personal recollections and correspondence. The following footnote to the history of an exceptionally well-known president calls attention to some intimate details of his childhood. It is a clearly expressed item of evidence. The reported numbers are small, some of them tiny; many would simply be rounded off in today's financial disclosures from presidential candidates as required by recent federal laws. The amounts and the items represented were, however, quite significant in the life of the former president whose private life and public career are both subject to considerable discussion.

Herbert C. Hoover was born in the Quaker community of West Branch, Iowa on August 11, 1874. His father was the owner and operator of an agricultural implement and blacksmith shop. When Herbert was 6, his father, age 34, died of typhoid (some sources say heart problems). Two years later his mother died of pneumonia, at the age of 35. Thus Hoover, along with an older brother and younger sister became orphaned and thereafter raised in the homes of relatives. From Hoover's memoirs we find that relatives were glad to take in the children, but that an acquaintance was named legal guardian in order to avoid any implication of manipulation of the estate. The estate, by no means large even in those days, was made up of proceeds from insurance and from the sale of the implement business and their home. It is the accounting for Herbert Hoover's share of that

estate that is of interest because here we find formal records, pages in guardian Laurie Tatum's account book (one of these pages here illustrated). Such records alone are far from complete in telling the story of Hoover's early life, but the contents make interesting reading, and a letter from the clerk of the local county indicates acceptance of reports, presumably based on pages from the book of account. These pages tell about the everyday investment in raising a child—clothing, room and board, a \$1.00 payment to a doctor. It shows a dwindling balance, more debits than credits, occasionally augmented by interest. Although the guardian usually paid \$1.50 per week for room and board, the rate was reduced to \$1.00 during the summer because Herbert worked on the farm of the family he lived with. Additional pages tell about the contributions of the fund as applied to sending Hoover to Stanford University.

The account book does not add to accounting theory, the author had no such intent. But neither could he have known that his handwritten pages would someday become one of the featured items in a Presidential Library for thousands of people to view and reflect upon. These pages must rank very high in terms of exposure to the general public. The contents also provide valuable material for authors who write about those years.

		Herbert Hoover	Dr	Cr
1894				
3 mo 7		Appointed Guardian for above		
4, 14		Rec of Cedar Rapids Mutual Relief Association 1/3 of life insurance of his mother		333 33
" "		To 1/3 the expense of going to Cedar Rapids to get the above RR fare. Horse feed at West Branch 40 One days work 40	1 20	
" 1		To J. J. Hoover for going to Kingsley & bringing Herbert to W. Branch	12 50	
" 12		To Cash to Allen Hoover for 6th mo	15 00	
			28 70	333 33
			"	29 70
8 mo 25		Bal due on rep't to Court		304 63
" 30		To Cash for board from 21 of 4 mo to 9 mo 8, @ \$150 pr week 20 weeks	30 00	
" "		To cash for clothing "6"		
" 1895 17		" " Dr. Daily for treatment	1 00	
1 mo 7		" " to Allen Hoover for board from 9 mo 5, 1894 to 1 mo 5, 1895 11 weeks at \$150 pr week	25 50	
1 mo 10		" Cash for clothing	22 21	
5 mo 28		" Cash to Allen Hoover for board from 1 mo 5 to 5 mo 25, 1895, 20 weeks at \$150 pr week	30 00	
8 mo 21		To cash for Allen Hoover for board from 5 mo 25, 1895 to 8 mo 17, 1895, 12 weeks at \$1.00 pr week (He worked some during vacation & board reduced)	12 00	
" "		For clothing & making	14 92.	
8 28		To 1/3 expense fixing fence of lot - see repairs & vouchers filed with J. J. Hoover's report	15 20	
" "		By 1/3 rent of property		19 87
" "		" interest on above @ 8%		13 84
" "		" 1/3 amount rec'd of Wm Hammell Administrator		352 18
" "		To charges as guardian	5 00	
			155 83	689 82
8 mo 25		Bal due at report to Court		533 99
		Carried to page 206.		

Account book of Laurie Tatum on Exhibit at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa.