



Thad Snow Papers (CG0027)

Collection Number: CG0027

Collection Title: Thad Snow Papers

Dates: 1923-1955

Creator: Snow, Thad, 1881-1955

Abstract: The Thad Snow Papers include writings, correspondence, scrapbooks, memorabilia and photographs. Snow was a prolific writer during his life. He is best remembered for his column, "Letters from the People" for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* beginning in the 1930s. The topics covered in this collection include politics, foreign affairs, farming, Snow's family, economics and human nature.

Collection Size: 1.31 cubic feet
(90 folders, 1 oversize box, 2 microfilm reels)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Cape Girardeau](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at capegirardeau@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Thad Snow Papers* (CG0027); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Cape Girardeau [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Cape Girardeau].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the University of Missouri by Frances Snow DeLaney on April 13, 1983 (Accession No. SA0088 / 2529).

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Biographical Note:

Thad Snow was born on November 1, 1881, to Henry and Frances Snow in Greenfield, Indiana. During his childhood, Snow spent time fishing and swimming with the famous Indiana poet James Whitcomb Riley. Tragedy struck the Snow family when Thad's older sister, Lena, died after being misdiagnosed with thyroid fever.

During his sophomore year, Snow transferred from a Methodist college to the University of Michigan. He majored in philosophy and spent most of his time studying. By the spring of his senior year, he was on the verge of a physical breakdown. He left Ann Arbor in April 1904, and, in an effort to regain his strength, took up farming on land his father owned near Greenfield. He married Bess Jackson that same year. They had two children, Hal and Priscilla.

Snow farmed the rich soils of Indiana, but by 1910, the "pioneer urge" took him and his family to Southeast Missouri. They purchased a large tract of river bottom land in Mississippi County near Charleston, Missouri. Snow coined the phrase "Swampeast Missouri" to describe the fertile area which, after draining and clearing, yielded bumper crops of corn, alfalfa, wheat, soybeans and cotton. His wife, Bess died suddenly in 1914 and he married Lila Simpson of Charleston six years later. This union brought two daughters, Frances and Emily. As farmers, they suffered through droughts, floods and the depression of the 1920s and 1930s. As a result of the depression, Snow filed for bankruptcy in 1930 but was able to hold on to his land and become a successful planter. His farm eventually included 1,000 acres and 20 sharecropper families to the land.

In 1937, Snow's wife, Lila, died after a long illness. Her death brought on another physical breakdown which left him nearly paralyzed for two years. Tragedy struck again in 1948 when Thad's son-in-law, John Hartwell Thompson committed suicide after killing his wife Priscilla, their nine-year-old daughter Ann, and Thad's youngest daughter, Emily. For the last seven years of his life, Thad suffered from poor health. Fortunately, his farm was so successful that he was able to give up full-time farming in the late 1930s and devote himself to reading, writing and public service.

Snow was active in Southeast Missouri business and government organizations. He was a member of the agricultural bureau, the flood control committee, and the county relief committee. He was also a veteran promoter of the state highway system. Some of the first concrete roads were laid in Mississippi County, in large part due to his efforts. Nationally, he was a strong supporter of Henry Wallace, the Secretary of Agriculture (1933-1940), who authored much of the New Deal farm legislation. In 1935, Snow joined 4,500 other farmers in a march on Washington to thank President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Wallace personally for their help.

Snow was concerned about tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and day laborers. During the 1939 Sharecroppers' five-day roadside sit-down demonstration, he wrote sympathetically about the demonstrators and provided aid to them. His critical analysis of government farm policy led to his appointment as an advisor to the Farm Security Administration on a project to relocate and rehabilitate dislocated farm tenants. In 1939, Wallace brought him to Washington D.C., to lobby for a revised farm control law which would ensure an equitable distribution of farm payments among landowners, tenants and sharecroppers. The coming of World War II and the subsequent rise in farm prices doomed the amendment. With the outbreak of the war Snow voiced his opposition to the United States involvement. He continued his reform efforts as a member of the National Planning Association's Agriculture Committee, which

published his report, "A Farmer Looks at Fiscal Policy," in 1945.

Snow is best remembered for his poignant writing. He frequently contributed pieces to the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* "Letters from the People" column beginning in the early 1930s. Over the years, he wrote about politics, foreign affairs, farming, his family, economics and human nature. In the early 1950s, Snow gave up farming altogether and moved to the Rose Cliff Hotel in Van Buren, Missouri. It was there he began to write his autobiography. *From Missouri* was published in November 1954, two months before his death from pneumonia on January 15, 1955. Snow is buried in the Independent Order of Odd Fellows Cemetery in Charleston, Missouri.

Arrangement: The collection has been arranged into the following four series:

Correspondence

Thad Snow's Writings

Artifacts and Photographs

Scrapbooks

Scope and Content Note:

The Thad Snow Papers are arranged into three main series: Correspondence, 1934-1949; Snow's Writings, 1921-1948, including letters to the editor, short stories, and speeches; and two Scrapbooks of newspaper articles by and about Snow, 1926-1954. Topics covered include personal reminiscences, farming in Southeast Missouri, government farm policies, roads, flood control, politics, the 1939 Roadside Strike, World War II, and foreign policy.

Correspondence:

This series contains correspondence between Thad Snow and various correspondents including Orville Zimmerman, Harry S. Truman, Frederick R. Barkhurst, John Sanford Shepard, Samuel B. Bledsoe, Martin B. Lechner, John T. Stewart from 1934-1949. Topics discussed include, sharecroppers, strikes, flood control, land purchases, pacifism, the atomic bomb, Delmo Labor Homes project, and farming.

Thad Snow's Writings:

This series contains short stories, letters to the editor, speeches, reports, articles, and book reviews written by Thad Snow from 1921-1948. Many of his writings were either published in the newspaper or included in his book *From Missouri*. Topics include farming in Southeast Missouri, farm policies, flood control, 1939 Sharecroppers Strike, opposition to World War II, hunting, fiscal policies, and the Curry Road Amendment. Snow also writes about the important people he interacted with including, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Leon Trotsky, Harry S Truman, Herbert V. Evatt, and Dorothy Thompson.

Artifacts and Photographs:

This series contains speaking engagement handbills for Owen H. Whitfield, William M. Tanner, Dr. Herbert Marshall, and Wade Tucker in 1939 and 1941. Whitfield was a part-time preacher and leader of the sharecroppers strike in 1939. Tanner was on the Executive Council of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. Marshall was a former

candidate for Congress (1938) and President (1940). Tucker was the director of organizers for the Associated Farm Laborers, Sharecroppers and Tenants of Southeast Missouri. This series also includes copies of photographs of Thad Snow, and his two daughters Emily and Frances, along with Owen and Zella Whitfield. In addition, a signed editorial cartoon signed by Daniel Robert Fitzpatrick of Joseph Stalin and Snow's wallet is included.

Scrapbooks:

This series contains copies of Snow's newspaper articles and letters to the editor from 1926-1955, in the Charleston and St. Louis, Missouri, newspapers and political periodicals. Snow was a frequent contributor to the "Letters to the People" column in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* from 1933 until his death in 1955. Copies of articles about Snow and reactions to his letters to the editors are also included. Topics include farming, economics, labor unions, the 1937 Mississippi River flood and Emerson Electric Manufacturing Company Strike, the 1939 Sharecroppers Roadside Strike, World War II, government planning, politics and foreign affairs.

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