



## **Jesse William Barrett Papers (C0009)**

**Collection Number:** C0009

**Collection Title:** Jesse William Barrett Papers

**Dates:** 1905-1953

**Creator:** Barrett, Jesse William, 1884-1953

**Abstract:** The papers of a St. Louis lawyer and politician; attorney general of Missouri, 1921-1925; Republican candidate for governor in 1936; commander of the Missouri Department of the American Legion, 1932-1933; and president of the Missouri Bar Association, 1933-1934. The collection includes material about the American Legion, Methodist Episcopal Church, Culver-Stockton College, Barrett's St. Louis law practice, term as attorney general, Missouri Bar Association, business and family, and Republican Party campaigns and elections.

**Collection Size:** 21.75 cubic feet, 11 volumes, 2 card files  
(1,902 folders)

**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-Columbia](http://The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia). If you would like more information, please contact us at [columbia@shsmo.org](mailto:columbia@shsmo.org). Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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**Preferred Citation:** [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Jesse William Barrett Papers* (C0009); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Columbia].

**Donor Information:** The papers were donated to the University of Missouri by Rodney Fairfield on December 20, 1953 (Accession No. CA3190). An addition was made on February 8, 1955, by Rodney Fairfield (Accession No. CA3227).

**Processed by:** The State Historical Society of Missouri-Columbia staff, date unknown. Finding aid revised by John C. Konzal, April 14, 2020.

### **Historical Note:**

Jesse William Barrett was born to Harry Hooven Barrett and Jeanette Amelia Bushman Barrett on March 17, 1884, in Canton, Missouri. Barrett's father owned and operated the local newspaper, *The Canton Press*, a family concern since 1863. He received most of his schooling in Canton, which included an A.B. (cum laude) from Christian University in 1902 and an LL.D. from Culver-Stockton College (formerly Christian University) in 1923. Barrett completed his LL.B. from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. in 1905.

After graduating, Barrett moved to St. Louis and began practicing law in 1906 with the firm of Hiram, Jefferies and Wagner in St. Louis. This marked the beginning of a law career in St. Louis that would span forty-eight years and was interrupted only by the world wars and his term as attorney general. In 1918, Barrett formed a partnership with Milton M. Dearing, which ended in October when Barrett reported for military duty at the Field Artillery Center Officers Training School at Camp Taylor, Kentucky. He was discharged in 1919 without seeing active duty in World War I. Barrett returned to St. Louis to resume his law career. Ultimately, he ended his career with the firm of Blayney, Barrett, Cook, and Fairfield.

Throughout his career Barrett fought for the progressive cause. In 1909, he was granted a two year leave of absence from Hiram, Jefferies and Wagner to serve as a special assistant to the U.S. District Attorney, who was prosecuting antitrust cases in the St. Louis area. He was counsel for the State of Missouri in antitrust proceedings against the Standard Oil Company from 1925 to 1926 and special counsel for the St. Louis Police Board in 1926. Other cases of importance included successful prosecution of the building material and cement combines, expelling the 3% housing trusts from Missouri, and representing the Missouri Press Association in freedom of press litigation. From 1941 to 1945, Barrett was chairman of the St. Louis Board of Election Commissioners.

Barrett was also active in the Republican Party and was appointed secretary of the Republican State Committee in 1919. Barrett ran for public office three times but won only once. In his first attempt, he was elected attorney general in 1920 and established a record as an energetic and competent prosecutor. Based on his success in this office, he ran for the Republican nomination for U.S. Senator in 1922, but finished behind R. R.

Brewster and Alex P. Sacks. After leaving the attorney general's office in 1925, Barrett returned to private practice in St. Louis, until his campaign for governor in 1936. He easily won the Republican nomination, but lost to Lloyd C. Stark in a close and controversial election.

Although Barrett only held one elected office, he was a powerful and visible force within the Republican Party of Missouri. He often filled the role of "peace maker" within the strife-ridden party during the 1930s and 1940s. Barrett's progressivism made him popular with the more liberal wing of the party, while his loyalty to the party made him a respected figure with the conservative faction of the party. This placed Barrett in an important position to help see the Republican Party of Missouri through the troubled period of 1936 to 1950.

Aside from his political activities, Barrett was also active in the Methodist Church, the American Legion, the Missouri and St. Louis Bar Associations, and the Board of Trustees of Culver-Stockton University. On November 12, 1953, Barrett died of a heart attack in his St. Louis office.

**Arrangement:**

The collection has been arranged into the following eleven series with two subseries:

- American Legion
- Methodist Church
- Communism and Fascism
- Culver-Stockton College
- Law Business
- Crank Letters
- H.B. Church, Jr. Letters
- Masonic Lodge
- Miscellaneous Papers
- Personal Papers
- Republican Party
  - Volumes
  - Card Files

**Scope and Content Note:**

The papers contain correspondence, clippings, articles, publications, and photos concerning Barrett's personal and public life. The papers have been kept in the original order, therefore each series has a different filing order dependent on the demand Barrett and his staff had for the material. The series in the collection are divided by subject, not by type of material. This means that each series contains correspondence, clippings, publications, articles, and, in some cases, photographs.

The series of **American Legion, Methodist Church, Law Business, Personal Papers, and Republican Party** are most complete. The series of **Communism and Fascism, Culver-Stockton College, Crank Letters, H.B. Church, Jr. Letters, and Masonic Lodge** are sparse, but do provide useful information for researchers.

The major strength of the collection is in documenting Republican Party politics in Missouri. Its major weakness is its organization, which lacks a uniform filing system and is subject to overlapping between series. The collection has also not been extensively indexed.

More complete descriptions of the series are in the folder list.

### **Container List:**

#### **American Legion Series**

Correspondence, news clippings, and related material concerning internal politics, policies, officers, committees, meetings, conventions, funds, and charities of the American Legion, both locally and nationally. The bulk of the material falls in the period 1932-1933, when Barrett was commander of the Missouri Department of the American Legion. It includes his correspondence, speeches, policy outlines, committee reports, and activities. Material is arranged in chronological order.

f. 1-284      1922-1953

#### **Methodist Church Series**

Contains correspondence and related material about the board of managers of Kingdom House for Boys; mission societies; St. John's Methodist Church of St. Louis; and monthly meetings and dinners of the men's club. The material is in chronological order and deals with fund raising, canvassing, budgets, disbursements, subscriptions, speeches to the men's club, membership lists and drives, and elections. There is correspondence with Ivan Lee Holt and other pastors on church affairs.

f. 285-316      1918-1948

#### **Communism and Fascism Series**

f. 317      Letter from Barrett requesting literature about the Communist party with a form answer and an anonymous letter signed with a swastika predicting the triumph of the "master race," 1936.

#### **Culver-Stockton College Series**

Correspondence pertaining to financing and operation of Culver-Stockton College in Canton, Missouri, of which Barrett was a trustee. Includes commencement addresses,

audit reports, minutes and meetings of the board of trustees and of the executive committee, building and expansion plans, school and alumni activities, reports of the American Association of University Professors, and information on efforts to establish and maintain satisfactory investments for the funds held in trust. The material is arranged in chronological order.

f. 318-400 1925-1947

### **Law Business Series**

Material from Barrett's career in Private practice and from term as attorney general. In chronological order and includes such topics as Standard Oil antitrust suit, 1925-1926; **Law Business Series (con'd)**

American Law Institute; American, Missouri, and St. Louis Bar Associations; and legislative and judicial action in Missouri, 1912-1950. Material is primarily in the form of correspondence with copies of legal briefs, speeches, and association minutes, proceedings, and elections.

f. 401-411 1910-1919

f. 412-424 1920-1924

f. 425-507 1925-1929

f. 508-642 1930-1934

f. 643-683 1935-1939

f. 684-724 1940-1944

f. 725-743 1945-1949

f. 744-761 1950-1953, n.d.

### **Crank Letters Series**

Miscellaneous correspondence requesting advice, investigations, or complaining about various subjects. Subjects include hypnotism, frauds, estates, and prohibition. Material is arranged chronologically. Several of the letters are anonymous; none were answered.

f. 762-768 1921-1928, n.d.

### **H.B. Church, Jr. Letters Series**

A series of letters between Barrett and his father-in-law, H.B. Church, concerning five gold mining claims in Colorado, their prospective worth, abstracts of titles, and the attempts of Church to gain a clear legal title. The correspondence is primarily legal in nature, as Church usually sought Barrett's legal advice. Material is in chronological order.

f. 769-771 1930-1936

**Masonic Lodge Series**

Includes the constitution and bylaws of the Scottish Rite of St. Louis, Valley of St. Louis Scottish Rite reunion programs for many of the years, expenditure lists and audit reports, executive meeting announcements and minutes, committee assignments, speeches made before and on behalf of the Scottish Rite, 1918-1950. Correspondence about sicknesses and deaths of members, rehearsals for degree convocations, dues, luncheon meetings, and letters of congratulation when Barrett became a 33<sup>rd</sup> degree Mason. All material is arranged in chronological order.

f. 772-822      1918-1950

**Miscellaneous Papers Series**

Correspondence, clippings, and printed material concerning St. Louis Chamber of Commerce, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, St. Louis Board of Police Commissioners, and the Missouri Press Association pertaining to speaking engagements, a commencement address, and committee meetings.

This series has been kept in original order. The correspondence and other materials are filed in chronological order according to initial contact with Barrett. Succeeding responses are filed after original date, i.e., material dated 1933 can be found in a folder dated 1931. Material is consistent throughout the series, except for the period 1905-1924; for this nineteen year period correspondence is sparse, with no material available for 1924.

|            |           |
|------------|-----------|
| f. 823     | 1905      |
| f. 824     | 1906-1919 |
| f. 825-827 | 1920-1922 |
| f. 828     | 1923      |
| f. 829-835 | 1925      |
| f. 836-841 | 1926      |
| f. 842-844 | 1927      |
| f. 845-847 | 1928      |
| f. 848-850 | 1929      |
| f. 851-856 | 1930      |
| f. 857-861 | 1931      |
| f. 861-864 | 1932      |
| f. 864-868 | 1933      |
| f. 869-874 | 1934      |
| f. 875-881 | 1933      |
| f. 882-892 | 1936      |
| f. 892-899 | 1937      |
| f. 900-906 | 1938      |
| f. 906-909 | 1939      |
| f. 910-916 | 1940      |
| f. 917-923 | 1941      |

|            |           |
|------------|-----------|
| f. 923-929 | 1942      |
| f. 929-932 | 1943      |
| f. 933-936 | 1944      |
| f. 937-940 | 1945      |
| f. 941-948 | 1946      |
| f. 948-953 | 1947      |
| f. 954-956 | 1948      |
| f. 957-960 | 1949      |
| f. 961     | 1950-1952 |
| f. 962-983 | Undated   |
| f. 984-987 | [VACANT]  |

### Personal Papers Series

Correspondence news clippings, and related printed material pertaining to Republican and Democratic parties of Missouri, the New Deal and Roosevelt, the Veterans Administration, Japanese expansion in Asia, Barrett's gubernatorial candidacy in 1936, and Mary Barrett's mental illness and treatment.

The material for 1925 to 1949 is extensive and parallels Barrett's active political career after leaving public office. Additional material for the period prior to 1925 can be located in two other series: **Law Business**, including some of Barrett's papers while he was attorney general, and **Miscellaneous Papers**, which includes limited correspondence for this period.

This series is in order initially by subject and/or person. After an initial contact a file was kept and all succeeding correspondence and related material was filed with the initial contact. The files were then taken as a whole and placed in chronological order based on the date of the initial contact. The easiest way to locate material in this series is to go to the year an event occurred and systematically proceed through the material.

|              |           |
|--------------|-----------|
| f. 988       | 1918-1922 |
| f. 988a      | 1923-1924 |
| f. 989-999   | 1925      |
| f. 1000-1008 | 1926      |
| f. 1009-1016 | 1927      |
| f. 1017-1023 | 1928      |
| f. 1024-1030 | 1929      |
| f. 1030-1037 | 1930      |
| f. 1038-1044 | 1931      |
| f. 1045-1048 | 1932      |
| f. 1049-1054 | 1933      |
| f. 1054-1062 | 1934      |
| f. 1063-1072 | 1935      |
| f. 1073-1078 | 1936      |
| f. 1079-1083 | 1937      |
| f. 1084-1091 | 1938      |
| f. 1092-1097 | 1939      |

- f. 1098-1103 1940
- f. 1104-1110 1941
- f. 1111-1117 1942
- f. 1118-1123 1943
- f. 1124-1131 1944
- f. 1132-1136 1945
- f. 1137-1141 1946
- f. 1142-1145 1947
- f. 1148-1151 1948
- f. 1152-1158 1949
- f. 1159 1950
- f. 1160-1162 Undated

### **Republican Party Series**

The series contains correspondence, clippings, campaign material, speeches, invitations, and reports on Barrett's activities in the Republican Party of Missouri. Topics include political patronage, success of party, and Barrett's role as candidate for attorney general (1921), U.S. Senator (1922), and governor (1936). The material has been arranged in chronological order with sections for material dated by year at the beginning of each year. A number of enclosures are missing and are presumed to have been removed by Barrett or one of his staff members.

Barrett's Republican Party correspondence was with many of the prominent national and state political figures of the early twentieth century. Correspondents include Frank Atwood, Sam Baker, James T. Blair, Jr., Clarence Cannon, Henry Caulfield, Bennett Champ Clark, Manvel Davis, Fred M. Dearing, Forrest Donnell, William Donovan, John D.M. Hamilton, Thomas C. Hennings, Jr.; Charles Hilles, William Hirth, Herbert Hoover, Arthur Hyde, James P. Kem, Frank Knox, Frank Lowden, Maurice Milligan, Ewing Y. Mitchell, Jr., Guy B. Park, Roscoe Patterson, William Phares, David Proctor, Edgar Queeny, Dewey Short, Forrest Smith, Sheldon Spencer, Lloyd C. Stark, Robert Taft, Harry Truman, and Wendell Willkie.

Of particular note is the correspondence with Harry Thomas, J. John Gillis, and Alex Saper from Kansas City, George B. Harlan from Boonville, Mercer Arnold from Springfield, and Grover Dalton, the state party chairman. This correspondence deals with the Republican Party in Missouri. Of significance concerning national Republican Party trends is the correspondence between Barrett and Richard Scandrett of New York; Barrett exemplified the conservative-isolationist wing of the party, while Scandrett was from the liberal-internationalist wing.

A list breaking down this series by year is available in the information folder.

- f. 1163-1169 1914-1916. The Republican Club in 1916 and Barrett's work as organizer of the Democrats for Hughes Club.
- f. 1170-1174 1917-1920. World War I.
- f. 1175-1176 1921. The fight for the nomination and the campaign for the attorney general's office.
- f. 1177-1187 1922. Barrett's unsuccessful attempt to win the nomination for the U.S.



- senatorial race.
- f.1188-1193 1923-1924. Correspondence on bond issues for roads, corporation franchise tax, and civic laws and material on the "Baker for Governor" movement and the Coolidge presidential campaign.
- f. 1193-1209 1925-1926. Barrett's involvement in Standard Oil antitrust suit case and minor elections in St. Louis and surrounding areas.
- f. 1210-1256 1927-1928. Barrett's senatorial and gubernatorial aspirations, Henry S. Caulfield as a gubernatorial candidate, and Barrett's efforts to aid the Lowden-for-President movements. Material on Lowden includes correspondence on the various aspirants and their support, especially Herbert Hoover and Arthur M. Hyde.
- f. 1257-1303 1929-1933. State patronage, party structure in Missouri, Lowden's proposed presidential candidacy, and Barrett's gubernatorial aspirations for 1932. Most material concerns the intraparty fight between Charles Becker and Edward Winter for the gubernatorial nomination in 1932 and control of the state Republican Party.
- f. 1304-1361 1934-1935. Refers to restoration of party unity, Barrett's maneuvering for gubernatorial nomination, attempt to win presidential nomination for Frank Knox, Barrett's courting of William Hirth and the Missouri Farmers Association for their support, and correspondence and literature directed against the New Deal.
- f. 1362-1657 1936. Barrett's campaign for governor against Stark, including correspondence, speeches, and campaign material; Landon's efforts to unseat Roosevelt. Much of Barrett's campaign was directed at the Pendergast machine and Stark's "acquiescence" to Pendergast. Additional material on gubernatorial campaign can be found in the volumes and files at the end of this series. Folders 1632-1657 include names and addresses of Barrett supporters across the state and lists of blacks and labor unions.
- f. 1658-1724 1937-1939. Addresses efforts to build up the Republican Party, destroy Pendergastism, and find candidates capable of winning on both state and national levels. Federal Judicial Reorganization Act of 1937, senatorial campaign of 1938, reappointment of Maurice Milligan as U.S. District Attorney for Western District of Missouri, and the campaigns of 1940 are the most prominent topics of this period.
- f. 1725-1780 1940-1941. Campaigns for Forrest Donnell for governor and Wendell Willkie for president, Donnell's appointment of Barrett in 1941 as chairman of the St. Louis Board of Election Commissioners, and many letters concerning patronage. Also contains material concerning the St. Louis mayoral election of 1941 and other minor city posts.
- f. 1781-1836 1942-1944. Search for a winning presidential candidate for 1944, the growing dissatisfaction of party regulars with Donnell, problems of the St. Louis and Kansas City Boards of Election Commissioners, and the effects of the war on the home front.
- f. 1837-1885 1945-1948. Correspondence concerned with the possibility of winning the presidency after Roosevelt's death, the actions of Harry Truman, the intraparty struggle among the Republicans of Missouri, Barrett's support

- of Thomas Dewey, and Barrett's worries as it became apparent that U.S. foreign policy was becoming internationalist in nature.
- f. 1886-1890 1949-1950. Addresses the recapitulation of the campaign of 1948 and attempts to explain the loss on both the state and national levels. Also discussions concerning the reorganization of the Republican Party in Missouri in 1950.
- f. 1891-1902 Undated. Miscellaneous material.

### **Volumes Subseries**

Volumes that were to or compiled by people in Barrett's campaign organization for the election of 1936.

- v. 1 Textbook, Republican National Committee, 1936
- v. 2 "Promise and Performance: The Administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt Reveals Itself," Republican National Committee, 1936
- v. 3 "Quotations from Addresses and Messages of Alfred M. Landon," Republican National Committee, 1936
- v. 4 "Quotations from Addresses, Messages and Statements of Franklin D. Roosevelt," Republican National Committee, 1936
- v. 5 "Statements of Franklin D. Roosevelt," Republican National Committee, 1936
- v. 6 "Quotations from Addresses, Messages and Statements about the New Deal by New Dealers and Democrats," Republican National Committee, 1936
- v. 7 Financial work sheets for State of Missouri, 1920-1934, and summary of constitutional and statutory provisions relating to departments and agencies of the state government of Missouri, 1933 (compiled 1935)
- v. 8 Record of state and county Republican leaders and organizations, 1936
- v. 9 Appointment calendar for 1936, beginning Feb. 6 and ending Oct. 13
- v. 10 Scrapbook on Barrett's nominations and campaign for governor, October 1935-November 1936
- v. 11 Reports of findings covering receipts and disbursements of revenue, State of Missouri, 1929-1936

### **Card Files Subseries**

Card Files 1-2 1936. Address file of Republicans composed of seventeen inches of cards that are separated into five sections: speakers, organization, finance, no committee, and organization and speakers. They are in alphabetical order within each section.

Card File 2 1936. Results of a poll of Republican Party leaders by Barrett which inquired about preferences for governor and local response to his prospective candidacy for governor. The poll cards were sent to most prominent Republican politicians, journalists, and professionals across the state.

**Index:**

| Index Term  | Folders   | Other | Image |
|---|---|-------|-------|
| Adams, James Truslow (1878-1949)                    | 1795,1796   |       |       |
| Alhambra Grotto Society Hall, St. Louis, Missouri   | 1504  |       | y     |
| Alt, Louis  | 768A  |       |       |
| American Legion                                     | 1-284   |       |       |
| Anti-Semitism, Missouri, 1935                       | 1334  |       |       |
| Atwood, Frank Ely (1878-1943)                       | 1301-1304   |       |       |
| Baker, Sam Aaron (1874-1933)                        | 1194,1195,1197-1201,1208,1211,1214,1238   |       |       |
| Barrett, James J.                                   | 1360-1378,1384  |       |       |
| Barrett, Jesse W. (1884-1953)                       |   |       |       |
| Barrett, Jesse W. (1884-1953)                       | 966,988   |       | y     |
| Bartholdt, Richard (1855-1932)                      | 768A  |       |       |
| Bartholomew, Harland                                | 768A  |       |       |
| Beach, Albert I. (1883-1939)                        | 1240-1242,1245-1247   |       |       |
| Becker, Charles U. (1868-1934)                      | 1272,1273,1278,1279,1281,1282,1284,1290,1295,1296,1298,1299,1303,1304,1308,1312,1313,1370-1373,1378                                     |       |       |
| Black, David L.                                     |   |       |       |
| Blackmar, Charles M. (1884- )                       |   |       |       |
| Blair, James T., Jr. (1902-1962)                    | 1660,1661,3190  |       |       |
| Bragan, Dick  | 1009  |       | y     |
| Brewster, Reginald R.                               | 1164,1182-1186  |       |       |
| Brownell, Herbert (1904- )                          | 1506,1662   |       |       |
| Brunk, Charles O. A.                                | 768A  |       |       |
| Bundschu, Henry A. (1887-1978)                      | 1247,1248   |       |       |
| Busch, August A., Jr. (1899- )                      | 853,1387,1393,1397  |       |       |
| Campaign literature--Missouri, 1920s                | 1186,1187,1193  |       |       |
| Catlin, Theron Ephron (1878-1960)                   | 768A  |       |       |
| Caulfield, Henry Stewart (1873-1966)                | 1241-1244,1246-1248,1250-1252,1254-1265,1267-1269,1271,1272,1277,1278,1282,1287,2189,1303, 1312,1356,1361,1365,1369,1375,1387,1388,1708 |       |       |
| Chillicothe Business College, Chillicothe, Missouri | 1878  |       | y     |
| Churches, Missouri, St. Louis                       |   |       |       |
| Clark, Bennett Champ (1890-1954)                    | 1295-1298,1303,1333,1334,1336,1339,1600,1655,1668,1670-1672,1675,1695,1697,1700,1704,1708,1823-1826,1833                                |       |       |

| Index Term                                     | Folders   | Other | Image |
|--|---|-------|-------|
| Coghlan, Ralph (1896-1965)                     |   |       |       |
| Colleges and universities--Buildings, Missouri | 321,1878  |       | y     |
| Commons, John Rogers (1862-1944)               | 1201  |       |       |
| Coolidge, Calvin (1872-1933)                   |   |       |       |
| Coughlin, Charles Edward (1891- )              | 1695  |       |       |
| Culver-Stockton College, Canton, Missouri      | 318-400   |       |       |
| Culver-Stockton College, Canton, Missouri      | 321   |       |       |
| Curtis, Charles A. (1860-1936)                 | 1235-1237   |       |       |
| Dalton, Grover W.                              | 1330,1331,1831-1845   |       |       |
| Davis, Manvel H. (1891-1959)                   | 1871,1872,1875  |       |       |
| Dearing, Fred Morris (1897-1963)               | 1213,1216-1218,1221,1255-1257   |       |       |
| Democratic National Convention, 1912           | 1877  |       |       |
| Democratic Party, Missouri, 1944               | 1824,1831   |       |       |
| Democratic Party, Missouri, Kansas City, 1944  | 1830,1831   |       |       |
| Dewey, Thomas E. (1902-1971)                   | 1821-1823,1826,1829,1830,1832-1834, 1837,1855,1865,1871,1873,1874,1879                                      |       |       |
| Donnell, Forrest C. (1884-1980)                | 768, 1163-1167, 1200, 1268, 1301, 1314, 1721, 1754-1756, 1776, 1821, 1823-1827, 1832-1836, 1839, 1840, 1887 |       |       |
| Donnelly, Phil M. (1891-1961)                  | 1107, 1823, 1825, 1827, 1828, 1831-1837, 1839, 1848, 1869   |       |       |
| Echterhoff, Henry C.                           | 768A  |       |       |
| Eisenhower, Dwight David (1890-1969)           | 1855, 1867, 1868  |       |       |
| Election, 1916, Presidential                   | 1164-1170   |       |       |
| Election, 1922--Missouri Senatorial            | 1177-1187   |       |       |
| Election, 1928, Presidential                   | 1250-1252   |       |       |
| Election, 1928--Missouri Senatorial            | 1210-1252   |       |       |
| Election, 1930--Missouri                       | 1272-1274   |       |       |
| Election, 1932--Missouri                       | 1290-1293   |       |       |
| Election, 1934--Missouri Senatorial            | 1308-1321   |       |       |
| Election, 1936--Missouri Gubernatorial         | 1063-1083, 1348-1657  |       |       |
| Election, 1944--Missouri                       | 1823, 1826-1828, 1832, 1834   |       |       |
| Election, 1944--Missouri, Senatorial           | 1825  |       |       |

| Index Term                               | Folders  | Other | Image |
|--|--|-------|-------|
| Election, 1946-- Missouri                | 1849, 1850, 1852   |       |       |
| Election, 1948--Missouri, St. Louis      | 1876   |       |       |
| England, London                          | 1  |       |       |
| Falkenhainer, Victor H.                  | 768A   |       |       |
| Fascism                                  | 1  |       |       |
| Fisher, Daniel D.                        | 768A   |       |       |
| Fiske, George M.                         | 140  |       | y     |
| Freemasons--Missouri, St. Louis          | 772-822  |       |       |
| Gannett, Frank Ernest (1876-1957)        | 1  |       |       |
| Gentry, North Todd (1866-1944)           | 1  |       |       |
| Grand Central Hotel, St. Louis, Missouri | 967  |       | y     |
| Graves, Charles R.                       | 768A   |       |       |
| Hadley, Herbert Spencer (1872-1927)      | 1163, 1193, 1196, 1200, 1207   |       |       |
| Hamilton, John Daniel Miller (1892-1973) | 1322, 1323, 1325, 1327, 1332, 1350, 1351, 1355, 1379, 1383, 1464, 1821, 1822, 1829   |       |       |
| Harper, Thomas M. (1889-1925)            | 989  |       | y     |
| Hayward, Edgar M.                        | 1  |       |       |
| Hennings, Thomas C., Jr. (1903-1960)     | 1797, 1798   |       |       |
| Hilles, Charles D. (1867-1949)           | 1297, 1306-1308, 1320, 1345, 1347, 1371  |       |       |
| Hines, John S.                           | 11, 43, 57, 58, 64, 75   |       |       |
| Hirth, William (1875-1940)               | 1313, 1316, 1319, 1321, 1323, 1336, 1338, 1340, 1347, 1350, 1352, 1357, 1363, 1438, 1439, 1450, 1498, 1506, 1511, 1512, 1519, 1520, 1530, 1532, 1536, 1538, 1539, 1545, 1556, 1560, 1561, 1566, 1569, 1570, 1576, 1583, 1596, 1601, 1602, 1604, 1609, 1611, 1659, 1666, 1667, 1670, 1682, 1683, 1685, 1686, 1689, 1692-1694, 1701, 1704-1706, 1713, 1738 |       |       |
| Holt, Ivan Lee (1886-1967)               | 285-316, 1858, 1862, 1864  |       |       |
| Holtcamp, Charles W.                     | 768A   |       |       |
| Hoover, Herbert (1874-1964)              | 1021, 1233-1238, 1250-1252, 1255, 1279, 1284, 1293, 1345, 1356, 1358, 1359   |       |       |
| Hotel Dixon, Kansas City, Missouri       | 1508   |       | y     |
| Hotel Kings Way, St. Louis, Missouri     | 1046   |       | y     |
| Hotel Statler, St. Louis, Missouri       | 1505, 1513   |       | y     |
| Hotels, Missouri, Kansas City, 1930s     | 1508   |       | y     |
| Hotels, Missouri, St. Louis, 1920s       | 967  |       | y     |
| Hotels, Missouri, St. Louis, 1930s       | 1046, 1505, 1513   |       | y     |

| Index Term  | Folders  | Other | Image |
|---|--|-------|-------|
| Houts, Charles Alfred (1868-1932)                 | 768A   |       |       |
| Hughes, Charles Evans (1862-1948)                 | 1164-1168, 1252  |       |       |
| Hyde, Arthur Mastick (1877-1947)                  | 1159, 1166, 1176, 1183-1185, 1224, 1235, 1239-1247, 1254, 1264, 1267, 1387, 1759, 1766   |       |       |
| Japan, 1941                                       | 1107   |       |       |
| John Marshall Club, St. Louis, Missouri, 1947     | 1862   |       |       |
| Joy, Charles F.                                   | 768A   |       |       |
| Kauffman, Roland P.                               | 1  |       |       |
| Kaufmann, Aloys P.                                | 1837, 1839   |       |       |
| Kem, James Preston (1890-1965)                    | 1831-1833, 1837, 1846, 1848, 1852, 1855, 1863-1865, 1873, 1887, 1888   |       |       |
| Kiel, Henry William (1871-1942)                   | 1163-1168, 1235, 1238, 1289-1292, 1375, 1385   |       |       |
| Kingdom House, St. Louis, Missouri                | 285-316  |       |       |
| Kinsey, William M.                                | 768A   |       |       |
| Knittel, Ferdinand I. G.                          | 768A   |       |       |
| Knox, Frank (1874-1944)                           | 1309, 1335, 1336, 1338-1345, 1348-1351, 1356, 1357, 1360, 1361, 1363, 1364, 1366, 1371, 1377, 1406, 1458, 1600, 1603, 1717, 1719, 1823 |       |       |
| Koeln, Edmond                                     | 768A   |       |       |
| Labor unions--Political activity                  | 1674   |       |       |
| Landon, Alfred Mossman (1887-1987)                | 1355, 1356, 1360, 1371, 1372, 1380, 1381, 1490, 1491   | v. 3  |       |
| Lawyers   | 1  |       |       |
| Lazia, John                                       | 1823, 1825, 1831   |       |       |
| League of Women Voters, St. Louis, Missouri, 1948 | 1867   |       |       |
| Liquor problem--Missouri, 1910s                   | 768A   |       |       |
| Lowden, Frank Orren (1861-1943)                   | 1215, 1216, 1228, 1229, 1233-1239, 1245, 1247-1251, 1269, 1270, 1274, 1275, 1280, 1294, 1453, 1454, 1526, 1532, 1595, 1604, 1746       |       |       |
| Maps--Lake of the Ozarks, 1935                    | 1342   |       |       |
| Maps--Missouri, 1933                              | 976  |       |       |
| Maps--Missouri, St. Louis, 1920                   | 977  |       |       |
| Martin, Joseph W., Jr. (1884-1968)                | 1867-1869  |       |       |
| Mayne, Walter Raymond (1893-1975)                 | 1821, 1823   |       |       |

| Index Term   | Folders  | Other | Image |
|--|--|-------|-------|
| McDonald, Thomas F. (1890- )                                     | 3190   |       |       |
| McKittrick, Roy (1888-1961)                                      | 1823, 1825, 1826, 1832, 1833   |       |       |
| Methodist Church   |  |       |       |
| Methudy, Adolph E.   | 768A   |       |       |
| Miller, Calvin N.  | 768A   |       |       |
| Milligan, Maurice M. (1885-1959)                                 | 1736, 1740, 1742, 1769, 1821   |       |       |
| Missouri Bar Association   | 3190   |       |       |
| Missouri League of Women Voters, 1922                            | 1180-1183  |       |       |
| Missouri, Canton   |  |       |       |
| Missouri, Fulton   | 996  |       | y     |
| Missouri, Pettis County. Courthouse, Sedalia                     | 1076   |       | y     |
| Missouri, St. Louis, Police Department, 1910                     | 768A   |       |       |
| Missouri. Attorney General                                       |  |       |       |
| Mitchell, Ewing Y., Jr. (1873-1954)                              | 1381, 1387, 1423, 1425, 1427, 1435, 1445, 1447, 1465, 1474, 1481, 1495, 1507, 1512, 1611, 1659, 1661, 1662, 1666, 1674, 1676, 1680, 1795, 1830, 1831                           |       |       |
| Morrow, Dwight W. (1873-1931)                                    | 1  |       |       |
| National Industrial Recovery Act                                 | 1062-1068  |       |       |
| Neun, Walter J.  | 768A   |       |       |
| New Deal, Opposition to, 1935                                    | 1357-1359, 1370-1374   |       |       |
| Norburg Sanitorium, Jacksonville, Illinois                       | 1103-1109, 1111, 1124, 1133, 1148  |       |       |
| Otis, Merrill E. (1884-1944)                                     | 1190-1196, 1198, 1228-1229, 1254, 1259, 1268, 1269, 1271, 1284, 1285, 1292, 1293, 1315, 1330, 1333   |       |       |
| Otto, Robert W.  | 1205-1208, 1269, 1297  |       |       |
| Park, Guy Brasfield (1872-1946)                                  | 1293, 1308, 1312, 1325, 1823   |       |       |
| Patterson, Roscoe Conkling (1876-1954)                           | 1202, 1238-1241, 1244, 1247-1253, 1255, 1256, 1259, 1265, 1267, 1270, 1272, 1275-1277, 1279, 1284, 1285, 1272, 1275-1277, 1279, 1284, 1285, 1288, 1305, 1312, 1315, 1379, 1400 |       |       |
| Pendergast, James M.   | 1847, 1848   |       |       |
| Pendergast, Thomas J. (1872-1945)                                | 1252, 1361, 1363, 1364, 1366, 1370-1372, 1374, 1375, 1380, 1382, 1383, 1823  |       |       |
| Peoples National Independent Ticket, Presidential Campaign, 1924 | 1193   |       |       |

| Index Term  | Folders   | Other    | Image |
|---|---|----------|-------|
| Pershing, John J. (1860-1948)                                       |   |          |       |
| Phares, William   | 1721  |          |       |
| Phillips, Alroy S. (1879-1954)                                      | 768A  |          |       |
| Physical Culture School, St. Louis                                  | 966   |          | y     |
| Politics, Missouri  |   |          |       |
| Politics, Missouri, 1910  | 768A  |          |       |
| Postcard photographs  | 966, 967, 988a, 1076, 1772  |          | y     |
| Proctor, David M.   | 1247, 1248, 1258, 1366, 1370, 1718, 1728, 1836, 1848, 1849                              |          |       |
| Prohibition, 1928   | 1225  |          |       |
| Prohibition, Missouri   | 762-768, 1169   |          |       |
| Psychiatry  | 1103-1109, 1111, 1124, 1133, 1148   |          |       |
| Purteet, Don  |   |          |       |
| Queeny, Edgar Monsanto (1897-1968)                                  | 1678-1681, 1821, 1823, 1829, 1831-1833  |          |       |
| Rassieur, Leo S.  | 768A  |          |       |
| Republican Finance Committee of Missouri, 1946                      | 1853  |          |       |
| Republican Finance Committee of St. Louis, 1944                     | 1822  |          |       |
| Republican National Committee                                       | 1350, 1355, 1379, 1838  |          |       |
| Republican Party  |   |          |       |
| Republican Party, Missouri, 1920s                                   | 1171-1266   |          |       |
| Republican Party, Missouri, 1930s                                   | 1267-1724   |          |       |
| Republican Party, Missouri, 1940s                                   | 1725-1889   |          |       |
| Republican Party, Missouri, Kansas City, 1944                       | 1830, 1831  |          |       |
| Republican Party, Missouri, Newton County, Central Committee, 1947  | 1861  |          |       |
| Republican Party, Missouri, Webster County, Central Committee, 1947 | 1863  |          |       |
| Rickey, Branch (1881-1965)  | 1445, 1672, 1673, 1723, 1732, 1733  |          |       |
| Rogers, Will (1879-1935)  | 1534  |          | y     |
| Roney, Thomas J.  | 1   |          |       |
| Roosevelt, Franklin Delano (1882-1945)                              | 1062-1068, 1073, 1075, 1708, 1831, 1832, 1834, 1841, 1843                               | v. 2,4,5 |       |
| Roosevelt, Theodore, Jr. (1887-1944)                                | 1314, 1315, 1317  |          |       |
| Scandrett, Richard B., Jr. (1891-1969)                              | 1223, 1297, 1313, 1329, 1331, 1394, 1396, 1440, 1735, 1855, 1856, 1860, 1868, 1871-1874 |          |       |



| Index Term                               | Folders  | Other | Image |
|--|--|-------|-------|
| Shackleford, Dorsey W. (1853-1936)       | 768A   |       |       |
| Short, Dewey (1898-1979)                 | 1335, 1396, 1397, 1403, 1429, 1430, 1467, 1481, 1487, 1598, 1671, 1695, 1696, 1740 |       |       |
| Sidener, Howard                          | 768A   |       |       |
| Smith, Alford                            |  |       |       |
| Smith, Alford                            | 1  |       |       |
| Smith, Alfred E. (1873-1944)             | 1250, 1251   |       |       |
| Smith, Forrest (1886-1962)               | 1765-1767  |       |       |
| Snow, John B.                            | 1335   |       |       |
| Spencer, Selden Palmer (1862-1925)       | 1190, 1192, 1194   |       |       |
| Stark, Lloyd Crow (1886-1972)            | 1363, 1364, 1366, 1371, 1382, 1718   |       |       |
| Stassen, Harold E.                       | 1871-1873  |       |       |
| Stephens, Hugh (1877-1960)               | 1205-1207, 1211, 1265, 1266, 1274  |       |       |
| Stock exchange                           | 495-545  |       |       |
| Stock exchange, 1930s                    | 495-545  |       |       |
| Stokes, Thomas O.                        |  |       |       |
| Stone, Harlan Fiske (1872-1946)          | 1190, 1192, 1194   |       |       |
| Sullivan, Frank H.                       | 768A   |       |       |
| Taft, Robert A. (1889-1953)              | 1736, 1855, 1861-1863, 1865-1868, 1871-1875  |       |       |
| Tariff, 1910                             | 768a   |       |       |
| Tate, Fred M.                            |  |       |       |
| Taylor, Wilson A.                        | 768a   |       |       |
| Thomas, Harry L.                         | 1810-1823, 1831, 1834, 1847  |       |       |
| Thompson, L. D.                          | 1277, 1278, 1291, 1292   |       |       |
| Thompson, Murray E. (1895-1960)          | 1868, 1869, 1871-1875, 1877-1880, 1883, 1884, 1888                                 |       |       |
| Treaty of Versailles                     | 1128   |       |       |
| Truman, Harry S (1884-1972)              | 1708, 1824, 1826-1828, 1830-1834, 1837, 1840-1843, 1845, 1846, 1865, 1894          |       |       |
| U.S. Post Office, Fulton, Missouri, 1925 | 996  |       | y     |
| Vandenberg, Arthur H. (1884-1951)        | 1408, 1430, 1855   |       |       |
| Veterans' Welfare Association            |  |       |       |
| Webster, George B.                       | 768A   |       |       |
| Webster, George B.                       | 768A   |       |       |
| Wheless, Joseph                          | 768A   |       |       |
| Wight, Ira E.                            | 1674   |       |       |
| Williams, George H.                      |  |       |       |

| <b>Index Term</b>   | <b>Folders</b>                                | <b>Other</b> | <b>Image</b> |
|---|---|--------------|--------------|
| Willkie, Wendell L.                                       | 1729, 1730, 1745                              |              |              |
| Winter, Edward H.   | 1291, 1295, 1296, 1298, 1299, 1356, 1363-1381 |              |              |
| Withrow, James E.   | 768A  |              |              |
| Women--Political activity, Missouri, 1930                 | 1271, 1272, 1277                              |              |              |
| World War, 1939-1945--France, German Occupation of, 1944  | 1129  |              |              |
| World War, 1939-1945--Pacific Theater of Operations, 1944 | 1130  |              |              |
| World War, 1939-1945--U.S., 1942                          | 1111, 1116                                    |              |              |