



Perl D. Decker Papers (C0092)

Collection Number: C0092

Collection Title: Perl D. Decker Papers

Dates: 1897-1935

Creator: Decker, Perl D., 1875-1934

Abstract: Speeches, news clippings, correspondence, and similar items of a Missouri Democratic Congressman, 1912-1919. Prohibition, Ku Klux Klan, women's suffrage and campaigning are some of the important topics discussed. Decker also practiced law in Joplin, Missouri.

Collection Size: 0.7 cubic feet
(53 folders, 5 volumes)

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://www.shsmo.org). If you would like more information, please contact us at columbia@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

Restrictions on Use: The donor has given and assigned to the University all rights of copyright, which the donor has in the Materials and in such of the Donor's works as may be found among any collections of Materials received by the University from others.

Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Perl D. Decker Papers* (C0092); 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 Louise Scott on August 24, 1945 (Accession No. CA0269).

Processed by: Processed by The State Historical Society of Missouri-Columbia staff, date unknown. Finding Aid revised by John C. Konzal, April 27, 2020

Historical Note:

Perl Decker was born in Ohio in 1875, and grew up in Kansas. In 1897, he graduated from Park College in Parkville, Missouri. While there, he gained recognition as an outstanding elocutionist. While in school, he won first place in the inter-state oratorical contests, having delivered an address entitled, "The Basic Law of Progress."

In 1900, Decker was admitted to the bar and established his practice at Joplin, Missouri. He became the city attorney, and in 1912, successfully ran for the 16th district Representative on the Democratic ticket. He held that position for three terms until he was defeated in 1918. During his political career, he gained much fame as an orator and was regularly called upon to speak, even after leaving public office. He had strong views on some of the major issues of the day. He constantly led the fight for prohibition and woman suffrage and stubbornly opposed President Wilson's proclamation of war. Later he changed his mind on the prohibition question stating that the repeal of the 18th amendment was the only logical thing to do.

After his political career ended, Decker resumed his law practice in Joplin. He died in Kansas City in 1934.

Arrangement:

The papers are arranged into one series:

Personal Papers

Scope and Content Note:

The papers are mainly composed of Decker's speeches and speech material. The collection also includes correspondence, news clippings, programs, and printed items relative to politics, prohibition, the Ku Klux Klan, woman suffrage, etc. Also included in the collection are five volumes. Three of the volumes are scrapbooks containing clippings and other items relative to Decker's political career. More detailed descriptions of the folder contents are in the container list.

Container List:

- f. 1 Recommendations, 1897-1899. Letters from prominent men testifying to Decker's remarkable oratorical ability. Also printed pamphlet made up of these statements.

- f. 2 Inter-State Oratorical Contest, 1897. Printed magazine, *M.S.U. Independent*, published by the University of Missouri and devoted to the oratorical contests. Decker, a student at Park College, Parkville, Missouri, won first place. There is also a program of the contest and a news clipping.
- f. 3-10 Political Material, 1912-1932
 - f. 3 Speeches, 1912-1932
 - f. 4-6 Campaign literature
 - f. 7 Newspaper clippings, 1903-1932
 - f. 8-10 Correspondence relating to state and national campaigns
- f. 11-13 Prohibition Material, 1912-1926. Bulletins, clippings, and speeches relating to prohibition campaign. Decker was a strong defender of prohibition.
- f. 14-15 Ku Klux Klan Material, 1921-1924. Speeches, bulletins, and clippings relative to the K.K.K. movement in Missouri.
- f. 16-20 Congressional Speeches, 1914 and undated. Remarks made by Representative Decker in Congress relative to the Panama Canal, tariff, woman suffrage, the war, monopoly, and other important issues of the period.
- f. 21-24 Patriotic Addresses, 1918. Delivered in honor of the World War I soldiers.
 - f. 22-24 George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Thomas Jefferson
- f. 25-26 Eulogies, 1901-1928. Delivered by Decker at the funerals of Professor H.S. Verrill, Park College, 1901, Guy Farwell, 1912, H.S. Miller, 1922, Woodrow Wilson, 1924, Edward Buxton, 1925, and John Malang, 1928.
- f. 27 Dedication and Presentations, 1901-1932. Presentation of a revolver to Marshall T.J. Cofer, 1901; introduction of Honorable James A. Reed, 1924; remarks about the Arkansas Apple Blossom Queen, 1926; and dedication of a high school, 1932.
- f. 28-30 Historical Speeches. Speeches containing historical interest. The Louisiana Purchase, the Charge of the Light Brigade, and the American soldier are topics included.
- f. 31-37 General Speeches. Delivered by Decker concerning various subjects such as tariff, woman suffrage, and League of Nations.
- f. 38-39 Legal Debates. Delivered by Decker while practicing law at Joplin, Missouri. Involve such things as mining disputes slander, and damage suits.
- f. 40-42 Park College, 1927. Correspondence relative to the 1927 commencement and the Interstate Oratorical Contest. Also the commencement address delivered by Decker, the program, and copy of the winning contest address, "The Yellow Peril," delivered by a Park College boy, and write ups in the school papers.
- f. 43 Associated Press Releases. Press releases of speeches by William Pickens, a black Yale University student, and Charles F. Thwing, president of Western Reserve University, before the American Missionary

- Association. Both speeches deal with the status of blacks and educational opportunities.
- f. 44-46 Relative to politics, speech making, and James A. Reed.
- f. 46 Copy of a letter in the Massachusetts Historical Society written in 1681 by a Puritan minister and concerning William Penn.
- f. 47 Newspaper Clippings, 1903-1935. Relative to a Negro lynching in 1903, legal debates, 1907, article by Henry Ford, 1916, address of Attorney General of United States, 1926, declaration of war, 1935. There is also a front page of a Berlin paper.
- f. 48 Woodrow Wilson, 1917-1918. Printed bulletin containing a copy of the President's proclamation of war to the people, 1917. Also a signed letter to Decker relative to a House Resolution, 1918.
- f. 49-50 Invitations, 1913-1917. To official functions in Washington, including President Wilson's inaugurations in 1913 and 1917.
- f. 51 Programs, 1915-1935. For various meetings at which Decker delivered addresses.
- f. 52 Bulletins, 1917-1926.
- f. 53 Personal Items. Membership in the YMCA, 1916, picture of Decker diving in the water, no date, New Year's greeting, Kiwanis songs honoring Decker, pictures and itemized account of automobile account, 1926.
- v. 1-5 News clippings and similar items of a Joplin, Missouri lawyer and Missouri Democratic Congressman, 1913-1919.
- v. 1 1913-1916
- v. 2 1912-1928
- v. 3 1928-1939
- v. 4 Platforms of the two great political parties, 1856-1916
- v. 5 Proceedings of the 16th National Convention of the Anti-Saloon League, 1915

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