



Frank P. Briggs Papers (C3950)

Collection Number: C3950

Collection Title: Frank P. Briggs Papers

Dates: 1900-1992

Creator: Briggs, Frank P., 1894-1992

Abstract: Papers of a Democratic Missouri state senator, U.S. senator, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife, Freemason, and newspaper publisher, consisting of correspondence, photographs, newspaper clippings, speeches, campaign materials, and miscellaneous papers.

Collection Size: 6.0 cubic feet, 2 audio tapes, 3 audio cassettes, 2 films, 9 audio discs
(295 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](https://www.shsmo.org/research-center-columbia). If you would like more information, please contact us at columbia@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Frank P. Briggs Papers* (C3950); 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 his daughter, Ruth B. Bratek, on March 17, 1993 (Accession No. 5270). Additions to the papers were made on March 24, 1993 (Accession No. 5274) and on December 10, 1993 (Accession No. 5386).

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Historical Note:

Frank Parks Briggs was born in Armstrong, Howard County, Missouri, on February 25, 1894, the second child of Thomas Hale and Susan Almira (Pyle) Briggs. Along with an older brother Eugene and sister Margaret (Bullock), he spent his early years on a farm, and was educated in the public schools of Armstrong. The family relocated to Fayette, Missouri, in 1907, where Briggs graduated from Fayette High School in 1911. After attending Central College in Fayette for three years, he completed his education at the School of Journalism of the University of Missouri, graduating in 1915 with a bachelor's degree in journalism. For many years he was the school's oldest living graduate.

Embarking on a career in journalism Briggs returned to Fayette and purchased half interest in the *Fayette Democrat Leader*, which he also edited for one year. Relocating to nearby Moberly, Missouri, in 1916, he spent a short time as the city editor of the *Moberly Index* before moving on to Trenton, Missouri, and purchasing the democratic *Trenton Times* in 1917. He published the *Times* through August 1918, worked as editor of the *Republican Tribune* of Trenton for a short period, and in 1919 began work as a platform manager on a Chautauqua circuit.

Returning to newspaper work, he edited the Shawnee, Oklahoma, *Morning News* for four years before returning to Missouri in 1924 and a position as city editor of the *Macon Chronicle Herald*. In September 1926 he purchased a controlling interest in the paper and continued as editor and publisher until selling the *Chronicle Herald* in 1973. A regular and very popular feature of the paper for many years was Briggs's column *It Seems to B*.

Membership in professional journalism organizations included Sigma Delta Chi, the Missouri Press Association, president of the Missouri Associated Dailies, and the National Press Club. In 1958 he received the University of Missouri School of Journalism Distinguished Service in Journalism Award, being cited for having "achieved the nearly impossible feat of keeping his newspaper and his public responsibilities entirely divorced from one another."

Briggs began his political career in 1928 when he was elected mayor of Macon, Missouri, the first Democrat to hold the office in 52 years. He resigned the post in 1932 when he was elected to the Missouri Senate. Reelected in 1936, 1940, and 1944, he served as president pro-tem for four sessions between 1941 and 1945. He managed Phil M. Donnelly's successful 1944 Missouri gubernatorial campaign--he also managed Donnelly's successful 1952 campaign--and in 1945 Briggs was appointed by Governor Donnelly to serve out the remaining two years of Vice President Harry Truman's U.S. Senate term. In his 1946 bid for election to the seat he was defeated by Republican James P. Kem of Kansas City. For some time, he was the oldest living United States senator.

Returning to Macon he continued to publish the *Chronicle Herald* and raised Angus cattle on farms in Macon and Shelby counties. He was appointed by Governor Donnelly to the Missouri Conservation Commission in 1947, served as chairman four times, and resigned in 1961 when President John F. Kennedy named him Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife. He resigned from the position in 1965 and later that year was appointed to an eleven-member Advisory Board on National Parks.

Briggs's fraternal and civic activities were numerous and included election as Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Missouri, 1936-1937, and in 1957, Grand Master

of the Grand Lodge, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Missouri. He was active in the First Baptist Church of Macon, and a member of the Rotary, Elks, and numerous other organizations.

Frank Briggs married Catherine Allen Shull in 1916 in Moberly, Missouri. They had two sons, Thomas Frank and Eugene Allen, and three daughters, Ruth (Bratek), Betty Barbara, and Dorothy (Ramon), 11 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. Frank Briggs died September 23, 1992, in Macon and is buried in Walnut Ridge Cemetery in Fayette, Missouri.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following nine series:

- Missouri Senate
- U.S. Senate
- Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife
- Freemasons
- Newspaper Clippings
- Photographs
- Speeches
- Personal
- Audiovisual

Scope and Content Note:

The **Missouri Senate** series consists of limited correspondence covering the years 1937, 1939-1945, which does not include the early years of Briggs's service in the Senate. It concerns legislation, committee work, concerns of constituents, election campaigns and the Democratic Party, including the 1944 Missouri gubernatorial campaign of Phil Donnelly, political appointments, and patronage. A representative sample of requests for jobs and other favors was retained. The correspondence also contains material related to some of Briggs's interests outside the Senate, including family matters, operation of the *Macon Chronicle-Herald* and other newspaper publishing business, and the operation of his farm in northern Missouri. The series is arranged by year and alphabetically by the last name of the correspondent thereunder.

The **U.S. Senate** series comprises primarily a very limited quantity of correspondence from Briggs's term as U.S. Senator from Missouri, 1945-1947, concerning legislation, constituent matters, the 1946 Missouri senatorial campaign, the Democratic Party in Missouri, and other political concerns. It is arranged alphabetically by the last name of the correspondent.

Completing the series is an extensive subseries of correspondence, newspaper clippings, speeches, campaign literature, and other material pertaining to Briggs's 1946 U.S. Senate campaign. The material provides a detailed view of the statewide operation of the campaign. The bulk of the campaign material is arranged by county followed by some general correspondence, speeches, newspaper clippings, and miscellaneous campaign related material.

In 1961 Briggs was appointed **Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife** and that series comprises primarily correspondence spanning his entire time in office, which ended in 1965. Although the correspondence covers the entire span of his time in office, it probably is a sampling of his communications while in office. There is very little intra-departmental

communication, contacts with other government agencies, or material related to the formulation of policy. It does relate to a variety of sport and commercial fishing and waterfowl conservation topics, other environmental and political issues nationwide and in Missouri, and various environmental conferences.

There is a great deal of contact with Missouri residents concerning conservation issues in the state. The correspondence is arranged alphabetically by correspondent followed by a separate run of outgoing correspondence, which is arranged chronologically. An extensive set of speeches made by Briggs while Assistant Secretary and miscellaneous items, which include a video recording of an interview, completes the series.

The **Freemasons** series comprises primarily correspondence, 1957-1958, when Briggs was Grand Master of the Grand Lodge, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Missouri. The series is arranged into general correspondence concerning legal matters, activities of chapters, and other administrative concerns, followed by subject correspondence concerning Masonic building projects, charity, committees and appointments, education, and jurisprudence. Each section is arranged chronologically. Correspondence and other material with details of cases regarding individual Masons was removed from the collection.

The **Newspaper Clippings** series is arranged chronologically, 1936-1992, and covers most of Briggs's public service career, including his time in the Missouri Senate, his appointment as U.S. Senator and his 1946 Senate campaign, activity as Assistant Secretary of the Interior, and time after his retirement. The series includes a sampling of Briggs's columns in *The Macon Chronicle Herald*, the long running *It Seems to B.*, from the 1950s through the 1980s, and *In the Senate*, which reported on the Missouri Senate, 1930s.

The **Photograph** series is arranged chronologically, 1900-c.1980, and includes images of Briggs throughout most of his life, following his political career as a state senator, campaigning for the U.S. Senate in 1946, serving on the Missouri Conservation Commission, while hunting in Missouri and other candid shots, as Assistant Secretary of the Interior, at Masonic events, and at functions later in life and after his retirement. The series also includes photographs of members of the Briggs family.

The **Speeches** series is arranged chronologically, 1939-1960s, n.d., and includes speeches given by Briggs at various dedications, political events, business meetings, and other types of functions. The series also includes a talk given by Catherine Briggs on Washington D.C. in 1946, and an audio recording of a Frank Briggs speech. Speeches made while campaigning for the U.S. Senate in 1946 and as Assistant Secretary of the Interior, 1961-1965, are found in those series.

The **Personal** series consists of a small amount of Briggs's personal correspondence, 1932-1992, and a variety of other materials. These include various certificates and awards presented to Briggs; biographical sketches; material concerning members of the Briggs family, which includes several short journals written by family members while driving through the U.S.; material concerning Macon, Missouri; and other miscellaneous papers related to the activities of Frank Briggs, 1959-1973.

The **Audiovisual** series contains largely contains recordings of speeches. Some recordings have been duplicated to audio cassette for use copies.

Container List:

Missouri Senate Series

Correspondence, 1937

- f. 1 A
- f. 2 B
- f. 3 C
- f. 4 D
- f. 5 E
- f. 6 F
- f. 7 G
- f. 8 H
- f. 9 I-J
- f. 10 K
- f. 11 L
- f. 12 M
- f. 13 N
- f. 14 P
- f. 15 R
- f. 16 S
- f. 17 T
- f. 18 W

Correspondence, 1939

- f. 19 A-F
- f. 20 H-Q
- f. 21 R-Z

Correspondence, 1940

- f. 22 A-B
- f. 23 Briggs, Wade
- f. 24 C-D
- f. 25 E-H
- f. 26 I-L
- f. 27 M
- f. 28 N-P
- f. 29 R
- f. 30 S
- f. 31 T-Z

Correspondence, 1941-1943

- f. 32 A-C
- f. 33 Briggs, Wade
- f. 34 D
- f. 35 E-K

- f. 36 L-M
- f. 37 N-S
- f. 38 T-Z

Correspondence, 1944-1945

- f. 39 A
- f. 40 B
- f. 41 C
- f. 42 D
- f. 43 E
- f. 44 H-J
- f. 45 K
- f. 46 L
- f. 47 M
- f. 48 Missouri Commission on Interstate Cooperation
- f. 49 N-R
- f. 50 S
- f. 51 T-V
- f. 52 W-Z

U.S. Senate Series

Correspondence, 1946-1947

- f. 53 A-B
- f. 54 C-D
- f. 55 Democratic newspaper in Missouri
- f. 56 E-F
- f. 57 G-H
- f. 58 I-K
- f. 59 L-M
- f. 60 N-P
- f. 61 R-T
- f. 62 U-W

U.S. Senate Campaign, 1946

- f. 63 Andrew County
- f. 64 Atchison County
- f. 65 Audrain County
- f. 66 Barry County
- f. 67 Barton County
- f. 68 Bates County
- f. 69 Benton County
- f. 70 Bollinger County
- f. 71 Boone County
- f. 72 Buchanan County
- f. 73 Butler County
- f. 74 Caldwell County

f. 75	Callaway County
f. 76	Camden County
f. 77	Cape Girardeau County
f. 78	Carroll County
f. 79	Carter County
f. 80	Cass County
f. 81	Cedar County
f. 82	Chariton County
f. 83	Christian County
f. 84	Clark County
f. 85	Clay County
f. 86	Clinton County
f. 87	Cole County
f. 88	Cooper County
f. 89	Crawford County
f. 90	Dade County
f. 91	Dallas County
f. 92	Daviess County
f. 93	DeKalb County
f. 94	Dent County
f. 95	Douglas County
f. 96	Dunklin County
f. 97	Franklin County
f. 98	Gentry County
f. 99	Greene County
f. 100	Grundy County
f. 101	Harrison County
f. 102	Henry County
f. 103	Hickory County
f. 104	Holt County
f. 105	Howard County
f. 106	Howell County
f. 107	Iron County
f. 108-110	Jackson County
f. 111	Jasper County
f. 112	Jefferson County
f. 113	Johnson County
f. 114	Knox County
f. 115	Laclede County
f. 116	Lafayette County
f. 117	Lawrence County
f. 118	Lewis County
f. 119	Lincoln County
f. 120	Linn County
f. 121	Livingston County
f. 122	McDonald County
f. 123	Macon County
f. 124	Madison County
f. 125	Maries County
f. 126	Marion County

f. 127	Mercer County
f. 128	Miller County
f. 129	Mississippi County
f. 130	Moniteau County
f. 131	Monroe County
f. 132	Montgomery County
f. 133	Morgan County
f. 134	New Madrid County
f. 135	Newton County
f. 136	Nodaway County
f. 137	Oregon County
f. 138	Osage County
f. 139	Ozark County
f. 140	Pemiscot County
f. 141	Perry County
f. 142	Pettis County
f. 143	Phelps County
f. 144	Pike County
f. 145	Platte County
f. 146	Polk County
f. 147	Pulaski County
f. 148	Putnam County
f. 149	Ralls County
f. 150	Randolph County
f. 151	Ray County
f. 152	Reynolds County
f. 153	Ripley County
f. 154	St. Charles County
f. 155	St. Clair County
f. 156	St. Francois County
f. 157	St. Louis County
f. 158	St. Louis City
f. 159	Ste. Genevieve County
f. 160	Saline County
f. 161	Schuyler County
f. 162	Scotland County
f. 163	Scott County
f. 164	Shannon County
f. 165	Shelby County
f. 166	Stoddard County
f. 167	Stone County
f. 168	Sullivan County
f. 169	Taney County
f. 170	Texas County
f. 171	Vernon County
f. 172	Washington County
f. 173	Wayne County
f. 174	Webster County
f. 175	Worth County
f. 176	Wright County

f. 177-179	Correspondence, General
f. 180	Correspondence, Treasurer
f. 181	Newspaper clippings
f. 182-184	Speeches, 1945 [see also a.d. 7-9]
f. 185-186	Speeches, 1946 [see also a.c. 1]
f. 187	Miscellaneous

Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife Series

Incoming Correspondence, 1961-1965

f. 188	A
f. 189-190	B
f. 191	C
f. 192	D
f. 193	E
f. 194	F
f. 195	G
f. 196	H
f. 197	I
f. 198	J
f. 199	K
f. 200	L
f. 201	M
f. 202	N
f. 203	O
f. 204	P
f. 205	R
f. 206	S
f. 207	T
f. 208	V
f. 209	W

Outgoing Correspondence

f. 210-212	1961
f. 213-214	1962
f. 215-216	1963
f. 217	1964 January-June
f. 218	1964 July-1965 February

Speeches

f. 219-221	1961
f. 222-223	1962 January-July
f. 224-226	1963
f. 227	1964 January-June
f. 229	1964 July-1965 January
f. 230-231	Miscellaneous, see also reel 1

Freemasons Series

- f. 232 General correspondence, 1931
- f. 233-237 General correspondence, 1957 May-December
- f. 238-241 General correspondence, 1958-1959
- f. 242 Building Committee, 1957-1958
- f. 243 Charity, 1958
- f. 244 Committees and Appointments, 1957-1958
- f. 245-246 District Deputy Grand Masters, 1957-1958
- f. 247-250 Education Committee, 1954-1958
- f. 251 Jurisprudence, 1957-1958
- f. 252-253 Masonic Home Building Campaign Committee, 1954-1955
- f. 254-256 Miscellaneous, 1930-1992

Photographs Series

- f. 257 1900-1945
- f. 258 1946, U.S. Senate Campaign
- f. 259 1947-1950
- f. 260 1950s
- f. 261-262 1960s, Assistant Secretary of the Interior
- f. 263 1960s
- f. 264 1970s-1980s

Newspaper Clippings Series

- f. 265 1936-1942
- f. 266 1945
- f. 267 1946
- f. 268 1947-1958
- f. 269 1961-1965
- f. 270 1967-1992
- f. 271-275 *It Seems to B.*, 1950s-1980s

Speeches Series

- f. 276 1939-1944
- f. 277 1947-1958 [see also a.c. 2]
- f. 278 1960s [see also a.c. 3]
- f. 279 Undated
- f. 280 Catherine Briggs

Personal Series

- f. 281 Correspondence, 1932-1978
- f. 282 Correspondence, Recognition dinner, 1961
- f. 283 Correspondence, 1979-1992
- f. 284 Awards, certificates, and presentations, see also reel 2
- f. 285 Biographical
- f. 286 Briggs, Eugene S.

f. 287	Briggs, Susan
f. 288	Briggs family
f. 289	Dog breeding
f. 290	Journals
f. 291	Macon, Missouri
f. 292	Macon County Civilian Defense Volunteer Committee, 1941-1942
f. 293	Macon Rotary Club
f. 294	Newspapers
f. 295	Miscellaneous

Audiovisual Series

a.c. 1	copy of audio recording of Frank Briggs' 1946 speech opening his campaign for the U.S. Senate at Sedalia, Missouri (see a.d. 1-6)
a.c. 2	copy of an audio tape of a speech, early 1940s (see a.t. 1)
a.c. 3	copy of an audio tape of a speech, 1960s (see a.t. 2)
a.t. 1	speech, early 1940s (use a.c. 2)
a.t. 2	copy of an audio tape of a speech, 1960s (use a.c. 3).
a.d. 1-6	audio recording of Frank Briggs' 1946 speech opening his campaign for the U.S. Senate at Sedalia, Missouri (use a.c.1)
a.d. 7-9	audio recording of a speech by Frank Briggs', 24 April 1946 (records are oversize and have not yet been duplicated)
reel 1	Speech as Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife, n.d.
reel 2	Presentation of honorary doctorate, 28 May 1961; and recognition dinner, 29 May 1961

Index:

Index Terms	Folders	Image
Briggs family	266,270,283,286-288,290	
Briggs family	257,260,262	Yes
Briggs, Catherine S.	266,280	
Briggs, Catherine S.	262	Yes
Briggs, Eugene S. (1890-)	257	Yes
Briggs, Eugene S. (1890-)	278,286	
Briggs, Frank P. (1894-1992)	1-295	
Briggs, Frank P. (1894-1992)	257-264	Yes
Briggs, Susan A. (1863-)	287	
Briggs, Susan A. (1863-)	257	Yes
Briggs, Thomas F.	294	
Democratic Party, Missouri, 1930s-1940s	1-187	
Donnelly, Phil M. (1891-1961)	34, 42, 192, 295	
Donnelly, Phil M. (1891-1961)	260	Yes

Index Terms	Folders	Image
Election, 1944--Missouri, Gubernatorial	34, 276	
Election, 1946--Missouri Senatorial	53-187, 267	
Election, 1946--Missouri senatorial	258	Yes
Environment--Government policy, 1960s	188-231, 269	
Freemasons--Missouri	232-256, 277	
Missouri, Macon	291-294	
Missouri. General Assembly, 59th-63rd	1-52	
Politics--Missouri, 1940s	34, 53-187, 267, 276	
Truman, Harry S (1884-1972)	31, 38, 51, 281	
U.S. Department of the Interior	188-231, 261, 262, 269	Yes