

***The* STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY *of* MISSOURI**

R1301 Farris, Frank Hiram (1867-1926)

Papers, ca. 1900-1927

Eight folders (.3 cubic foot)

This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri](http://TheStateHistoricalSocietyofMissouri.org).

If you would like more information, please contact us at shsresearch@umsystem.edu.

PROVENANCE

The Farris papers were donated by Lynn Morrow on 22 August 2012, SHSMO #RA1566.

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Lebanon, Missouri on 8 August 1867, Frank Hiram Farris was a son of Alvira Josephine Lewis and John W. Farris. The elder Farris, a printer from Clay County, Illinois and Civil War veteran, came to Laclede County, Missouri following the war. He established the *Lebanon Signal* newspaper in 1870 and entered politics, ultimately becoming Speaker of the Missouri House of Representatives in 1897. Frank's first experience of politics was as a Senate page and, later, clerk. He simultaneously read law and was admitted to the bar in 1887. He was appointed prosecuting attorney of Crawford County in 1893, and ventured into Democratic party politics. Voters elected him to the Missouri Senate in 1898 and 1902, but scandal engulfed Farris during his second term. In 1903, he was indicted for bribery and influence peddling in the so-called "Boodle" scandal, and underwent two trials before being acquitted of charges in 1906.

In a rare political move probably orchestrated by party leaders, Farris voluntarily left the Senate following his acquittal, thereby freeing the seat for Carter Buford of Reynolds County. Farris then announced for the House of Representatives from Crawford County, where he won handily. He did not run for office in 1908, but returned to the House in 1910. He moved in 1912 to Rolla, a base from which he successfully won three terms in the House from Phelps County (1914-1920). Farris campaigned for, but lost, the Democratic nomination for governor in 1920 and then was beaten in a belated reelection run for his House seat. In addition to his legislative duties, Farris enjoyed a wide legal practice and was a counsel for the Frisco railroad. He was also a curator of the Missouri School of Mines. Farris won election to the Missouri Senate in 1922. He was reelected for a second term in 1926, but died at Rolla from stomach cancer on 1 September 1926. He was buried in the Rolla Cemetery in a sunset ceremony largely attended by state legislators, judges, officials, and constituents.

Farris was widely known for his skills as a parliamentarian, debater and orator, but also for his unpretentiousness and down home style. His manner and politics presented "a picture of the Missourian of tradition, but slightly modernized" according to a memorial in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Farris was born and bred to politics, however, and was a dependable Democratic "pack horse" in the House and Senate for nearly three decades. He was a powerful conservative force in the legislature, helping to defeat laws establishing direct legislation (the initiative and

referendum), reducing railroad freight rates, and establishing game laws. However, Farris also helped pass the “beer law,” creating millions in state revenues, and voted for Prohibition enforcement legislation even though he was personally “wet.” Farris moderated his views enough by 1917 that he supported progressive legislation involving game laws and helped fund Missouri’s first state park. He was active in many state and national conventions, and participated in the Missouri Constitutional Convention in 1922. That same year, Farris demonstrated the extent of his power at its zenith when he blocked the nomination of United States Senator James Reed of Missouri for president. Farris blamed Reed for his defeat in the gubernatorial primary in 1920, but also accused the senator of disloyalty to President Woodrow Wilson over the League of Nations.

Farris was married three times. He was survived by his third wife, Bertha Dent, thirty years his junior, and young daughter. He was also survived by three daughters by his first marriage. One of them, Mrs. Bessie Grubb, probably gathered the Farris materials in this collection (see folder 1).

SCOPE AND CONTENT

These are papers of a long term Democratic state legislator from Crawford and Phelps counties in Missouri. The collection includes photographic portraits of Farris and his printed orations, clippings and other items from political campaigns, and newspaper death notices and memorials collected after Farris’s death in 1926.

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PREFERRED CITATION

Frank H. Farris papers, State Historical Society of Missouri

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INVENTORY

Folder 1: Addresses by Frank H. Farris [bound copy inscribed to Mrs. Bessie Grubb], n.d.
The Ozarks
I Don't Know Where I'm Going, But I'm On My Way

Folder 2: Addresses by Frank H. Farris [three printed addresses, unbound]
Oration Delivered by Frank H. Farris, Steelville, Mo., 1914
High School Address, n.d.
The League of Nations, n.d.

Folder 3: Memorial Address by Frank H. Farris at the Passing of William Wallace Green,
before the Senate, March 19, 1925

Folder 4: Political items [these items are **OVERSIZE**]
Poster, Democratic primary for governor, August 1920
Campaign advertisement on newsprint, ca. 1922
"Reed Disloyal to Democratic Party," ca. 1922
Amendments to Present Constitution to be Submitted, 1924

Folder 5: Newspaper clippings [photocopied from scrapbook], 1920-1926

Folder 6: Newspaper obituaries and death notices, 1926

Folder 7: Memorials and Eulogies, 1927
Senate Memorial Service and record from Senate *Journal*
"Senator Frank H. Farris—An Appreciation," by G. V. Mosby
"A Eulogy on Senator Frank H. Farris by Senator Phil M. Donnelly of Lebanon delivered
at the Senate Memorial Service in Memory of Senator Frank H. Farris, Senate Hall,
Jefferson City, Missouri, February 16, 1927."

Folder 8: Photographs, ca. 1890s-1920s
[One portrait is **OVERSIZE**]

INDEX TERMS

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