

Missouri State Archives

Finding Aid 3.33

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ELLIOT WOOLFOLK MAJOR, 1913-1917

Abstract: Records (1914-1916) of Governor Elliot Woolfolk Major (1864-1949) include applications, correspondence, certifications, court notices, filing notes and resignations.

Extent: 1 folder

Physical Description: Paper

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Access Restrictions: No special restrictions.

Publication Restrictions: Copyright is in the public domain.

Required Citation: [Item description], [date]; Elliot Woolfolk Major, 1913-1917, Record Group 3.33; Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City.

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HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Elliot Woolfolk Major was born on October 24, 1864 in Edgewood, Lincoln County, Missouri to James Reed Major and Sarah Ann Taylor Woolfolk. He attended public schools in Pike County and the Watson Seminary in Ashley. He married Elizabeth Terrill Myers in Bowling Green, Missouri on June 14, 1887 and the couple raised three children.

Major began work as a teacher in 1884 but left to study law with James Beauchamp Clark in Bowling Green. He was admitted to the Missouri Bar in 1885. Major served as law clerk for Clark in the Missouri legislature in 1889 and was briefly a partner in the Clark law firm. He established a reputation as a trial lawyer and became interested in politics. Major was elected in 1896 to the Missouri Senate from the 11th District and served through 1899 when he became editor of the *Revised Statutes of Missouri*.

In 1908, Major was elected attorney general. He argued more than a thousand cases before the Missouri Supreme Court and took 52 cases to the United States Supreme Court. One successful decision upheld Missouri's maximum railroad freight-rate laws. Of particular importance, the U. S. Supreme Court unanimously upheld Missouri's law in the state suit against Standard Oil Company.

Major defeated John C. McKinley in the 1912 gubernatorial election and was sworn in as Missouri's 33rd governor on January 13, 1913. Major personally read his biennial messages to the General Assembly, the first governor to do so. During his administration, the Missouri legislature ratified the 17th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution in 1913. The first senator directly elected to the U. S. Senate by Missourians was William Joel Stone in 1914. Use of the referendum as a legislative process was tested in 1914 when four measures were voted on by the general public (they all failed).

A primary accomplishment of the Major administration included the creation in 1913 of the Public Service Commission in order to regulate rates charged by the utility companies. Also during the Major administration, the Pardon and Parole Board was established, and Missouri's first comprehensive securities act was passed to supervise corporations operating in the state. Missouri road improvement interested Major and in 1913 and 1914 (Good Road Days) he worked alongside volunteers to construct nearly 400 miles of roads; and also, the state highway department was established. On March 22, 1913, the governor approved the adoption of a state flag designed by Marie Watkins Oliver of Cape Girardeau. Designated for the first Monday in October, Missouri Day was approved on March 22, 1915. The governor refused to raise taxes throughout his term and combined with overspending, the state was \$2.5 million in debt when the governor's term expired.

When his term ended in 1917, Major opened a law office in St. Louis, continuing his legal career until he retired in 1945. He remained active in civic affairs and maintained memberships in the American, Missouri, and St. Louis Bar Associations along with the Odd Fellows, the Elks, and the Masonic Lodge. Governor Major died on July 9, 1949 in Eureka, St. Louis County and is interred in City Cemetery in Bowling Green, Missouri.

Timeline

October 24, 1864	Born to James Reed Major and Sarah Ann Taylor Woolfolk, Edgewood, Lincoln County
1884-1885	Studied law with James Beauchamp "Champ" Clark; admitted to the Missouri Bar
June 14, 1887	Married Elizabeth Terrill Myers in Bowling Green, Pike County
1897-1901	Missouri state senator, 11 th District
1909-1912	Attorney General

1913-1917	Sworn in on January 13, 1913; 33 rd Governor
January 8, 1917	Retired from public service, resumed law practice in St. Louis
July 9, 1949	Died in Eureka, St. Louis County; interned at City Cemetery, Bowling Green, Pike County

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

Bibliography

Carnahan, Jean. *If Walls Could Talk: the Story of Missouri's First Families* (Jefferson City, Mo.: Missouri Mansion Preservation, Incorporated, 1995), pp. 160-167.

Christensen, Lawrence O., et al. *Dictionary of Missouri Biography* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1999), pp. 514-516.

National Governor's Association, Governor's Information—Elliot Woolfolk Major (online) <http://www.nga.org>

Shoemaker, Floyd Calvin. *Missouri and Missourians: Land of Contrasts and People of Achievements* (Chicago, Ill.: Lewis Publishing Company, 1943), volume II, pp. 265-279.

Williams, Walter and Shoemaker, Floyd Calvin. *Missouri: Mother of the West* (Chicago, Ill.: American Historical Society, 1930).

Related Material

State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia holds the following manuscript collections. Please see SHS for references in numerous additional collections to Governor Major:

C4039, the Elliot Woolfolk Major (1864-1949) Papers, 1860s-1950. The collection contains newspaper clippings, photographs, pamphlets, telegrams, and memos relating to Elliott Major's campaign for governor of Missouri in 1912, and major events that occurred during his administration.

Major, Elliot Woolfolk. *Address of Elliott W. Major: delivered at Jefferson City, October 6, 1924: dedicating the new capitol building* (Jefferson City, Mo., 1924).

CORRESPONDENCE, 1914-1916

Extent: 1 folder

Arrangement: Chronological

Scope and Content

The collection includes applications, correspondence, certifications, court notices, filing notes and resignations.

Container List

Location	Box	Folder	Date	Contents
1B/1/5	1	4	May 28, 1913	Correspondence: William D. Johnson, Crocker, Pulaski County; resignation from House of Representatives; includes acceptance note from the governor and filing note from Cornelius Roach, secretary of state
1B/1/5	1	4	June 21, 1913	Correspondence: Doc Brydon, Essex, Stoddard County; resignation from the House of Representatives; includes acceptance note from the governor and filing note from Cornelius Roach, secretary of state
1B/1/5	1	4	July 11, 1913	Correspondence: J. W. Wilson, Paris, Monroe County; resignation as county coroner; certification from the County Court of the court appointed replacement C. H. Dixon to fill remainder of term; signed by M. K. Curtright; includes filing note from Cornelius Roach, secretary of state
1B/1/5	1	4	August 12, 1913	Correspondence: Francis N. Wilson, Platte City, Platte County; resignation from the Senate, 3 rd District; includes acceptance note from the governor and filing note from Cornelius Roach, secretary of state
1B/1/5	1	4	January 5, 1914	Correspondence: A. H. Mann, Kansas City, Jackson County; has left the dentistry profession; resignation from State Board of Dental Examiners; includes acceptance note from the governor
1B/1/5	1	4	February 20, 1914	Correspondence: Ross C. Cox, St. Joseph, Buchanan County; certified notice of the death of Judge William D. Rusk

1B/1/5	1	4	July 1, 1915	Correspondence: Governor Charles Seymour Whitman, Albany, New York; recommends Frederick S. Robinson of New York City as commissioner of deeds for Missouri residing in New York
1B/1/5	1	4	July 10, 1915	Correspondence: Frederick S. Robinson, New York, New York; requests position of commissioner of deeds for Missouri residing in New York
1B/1/5	1	4	July 12, 1915	Correspondence: Peter B. Behr, St. Louis; transmittal of letters recommending Frederick S. Robinson of New York City as commissioner of deeds for Missouri residing in New York; enclosed check to cover appointment fees
1B/1/5	1	4	November 21, 1916	Correspondence: Governor Martin Grove Brumbaugh, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; recommends Louis Karstaedt of Philadelphia as commissioner of deeds for Missouri residing in Pennsylvania
1B/1/5	1	4	December 11, 1916	Correspondence: James A. Long, Powersville, Putnam County; requests position as commissioner of deeds for Missouri residing in Gallette, Wyoming; also signed by P. D. Guggers and J. T. Morgan; includes note from the governor issuing the commission and a filing note from Cornelius Roach, secretary of state