

The Filson Historical Society

**Yager, Arthur, 1858-1941
Papers, 1913-1921.**

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Special Collections, James J. Holmberg

Size of Collection:

1.75 Cubic Feet

Location Number:

Mss./A/Y13

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Scope and Content Note

Collection includes the accumulated correspondence, speeches, reports, clippings and other materials of Arthur Yager during his service as Governor of Puerto Rico (1913-1921). Previously the president of Georgetown College in Georgetown Ky., Yager was appointed to the governorship of Puerto Rico by Woodrow Wilson in 1913. Yager and Wilson attended John Hopkins University together and maintained a relationship throughout both of their careers.

The collection contains correspondence dealing with Yager's activities as governor, specifically his appointments, proposed legislation, and handling of labor and economic issues on the island. Correspondence discusses in detail Yager's efforts in formulating and passing the Jones Act of 1917, which replaced the Foraker Act of 1900 and granted U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans and reorganized Puerto Rico's government and relationship to the United States.

Other topics of interest include: labor strikes, economic conditions, the coffee and sugar industries, prohibition, the 1918 earthquake, Puerto Rican elections and political parties, the court system, disease, tourism, race relations, World War I, administration of the draft, migrant labor, foreign relations, education, general social conditions of the island, and Kentucky politics.

Correspondents of note include: Presidents Woodrow Wilson, Calvin Coolidge, Warren G. Harding, and Herbert Hoover; Secretary of War Newton Baker; Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels; Resident Commissioners of P.R. Felix Cordova-Davila and Luis Munoz-Rivera; Samuel Gompers and Puerto Rican labor leader Santiago Iglesias; Senators William A. Jones, John F. Shafroth, Ollie M. James, and John W. Weeks; Secretary of Puerto Rico Martin Travieso, Jr.; and Frank McIntyre, Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs.

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Biographical Note

Arthur Yager was born on October 29, 1858 in Henry County, Kentucky to Franklin Jackson and Diana (Smith) Yager. He earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees at Georgetown College in Georgetown, Kentucky. After receiving a doctorate from Johns Hopkins University, Yager returned to Georgetown College where he was a professor, then President from 1908-1913.

Yager married Estell Lewis, with whom he had four children. In 1913, Arthur Yager was appointed as Governor of Puerto Rico by President Woodrow Wilson, his former classmate at John Hopkins. Governor for eight years, Yager worked diligently to develop the island's infrastructure, particularly in the areas of transportation and roadways, public health, and literacy. Yager was instrumental in the adoption of the Jones-Shafroth Act in 1917. With the passage of this act, Puerto Ricans officially became U.S. citizens for the first time, and they gained the right to freely elect members of the island's legislative branches. When Wilson's presidency expired, Yager was succeeded by Emmet Montgomery Reily, an appointee of President Warren G. Harding.

Yager returned to Louisville, Kentucky where he was a visiting lecturer on many topics. In 1928, he ran unsuccessfully for U.S. Congress in Kentucky's fifth district. He died in Pewee Valley, Kentucky in 1941.

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