These are letters to Thomas B. Whitledge, an attorney and politician in St. Marys, Ste. Genevieve County, Missouri. Correspondents include Edward A. Rozier, Benjamin B. Cahoon, and Richard C. Kerens. Subjects include levee districts, railroads, oil exploration, and the Republican Party. Topics in the latter category include patronage, religious toleration, and the Taft/Roosevelt split of 1912.

Thomas Benson Whitledge was born on 1 June 1844 in Pike County, Missouri. His father, for whom Whitledge was named, had died about three weeks previous, and Whitledge was raised by his widowed mother and elder brothers and sisters. As a young man he made an overland journey to California, but he returned to Missouri to become a steamboat clerk on the Mississippi River. On 26 January 1875 he married Sarah Fairchild Gilbert of Cairo, Illinois. They established residence in St. Marys, Ste. Genevieve County, Missouri, which had been founded by Sarah’s father, Miles F. Gilbert. She died on 28 December 1905, and Whitledge never remarried. He died at Hot Springs, Arkansas, on 17 May 1917, and is buried beside his wife in St. Marys.

While working on the river Whitledge studied law, and was admitted to the Missouri Bar in 1880. He built a successful practice and became active in the Republican Party, running unsuccessfully for the U.S. House of Representatives in 1892. He was elected to the Missouri Senate in 1910 and was re-elected in 1914. A political conservative, he supported the renomination of William Howard Taft in 1912.

The Whitledge papers deal mostly with his legal and political careers. There is also some family correspondence, largely from his elder brother, Ralph J. Whitledge, a former river boat pilot and captain who was on the St. Louis, Missouri, Harbor and Wharf Commission and was a Supervisor for the U.S. Steam-Vessel Inspection Service, and his in-laws, the Gilberts of Cairo, Illinois.

The papers which deal with Whitledge’s law practice are for the most part routine, although they do concern themselves with such topics as levee districts (particularly Perry County, Missouri, Levee District No. 1), railroads (especially the Saline Valley Railroad Company, the St. Louis-San Francisco Railway, and the Southern Missouri Railroad Company), and petroleum exploration in Ste. Genevieve County.

Whitledge’s political papers will doubtless be of the most interest to researchers. They deal with Republican Party patronage, strategy, and ideology, particularly in the city of St. Louis, Ste. Genevieve County, and surrounding areas. Whitledge seemed to have considerable influence in party affairs, and was a voice for moderation, accommodation, and toleration. His correspondence from U.S. District Attorney Edward A. Rozier, B. B. Cahoon, and Richard C. Kerens is particularly instructive in this area.


The Whitledge papers consist almost entirely of letters addressed to Thomas B. Whitledge; copies of his outgoing correspondence are rare. The letters are filed in chronological order.
**Shelf List**

These are letters to Thomas B. Whitledge, an attorney and politician in St. Marys, Ste. Genevieve County, Missouri. Correspondents include Edward A. Rozier, Benjamin B. Cahoon, and Richard C. Kerens. Subjects include levee districts, railroads, oil exploration, and the Republican Party. Topics in the latter category include patronage, religious toleration, and the Taft/Roosevelt split of 1912.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Inclusive Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>1874-1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>1896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>1897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>January-March 1898</td>
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<td>05</td>
<td>April-June 1898</td>
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<td>06</td>
<td>July-September 1898</td>
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<td>07</td>
<td>October-December 1898</td>
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<td>08</td>
<td>January-March 1899</td>
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<td>09</td>
<td>April-December 1899</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1900</td>
</tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td>January-May 1901</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>June-December 1901</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>1902</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>1903</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>1908</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>1909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>1910-1911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1912-1916</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Index Cards**

Akins, T. J.
Altgeld, John Peter, 1847-1902.
American Protective Association.
Anthony, R. A.
Anthony, W. S.
Anti-Single-Tax Society.
Askin, W. C.
Bakewell, Farish & Mead.
Bartels, Charles R.
Bates, S. A.
Baughn, E. C.
Block, H. L.
Bogy, John L.
Bogy, Lewis.
Bond, Samuel.
Bonne Terre Farming and Cattle Company.
Bosworth, C. H.
Boverie, William C.
Boy, B. H.
Brewer, James R.
Brokaw, A. V. L.
Brooks, James F.
Brown, John C.
Buchanan, G. V.
Buck, J. W.
Buckley, E. R.
Buenniger, Adam.
Burkhead, Asbery.
Burroughs, Benjamin R.
Cahoon, Benjamin Benson, 1846-1923.
Cairo (Ill.).
Cape Girardeau and Chester Railroad.
Cape Girardeau and Thebes Bridge Terminal Railroad Company.
Carter, William.
Case, J. H.
Case, James.
Cashion, A. V.
Cashion, Archibald H.
Chester, Perryville and Ste. Genevieve Railway.
Chester, Perryville, Ste. Genevieve, and Farmington Railroad.
Civic Improvement Club (Desloge, Mo.)
Clapp, Frederick G.
Coffman, Frank E.
Cole, Charles B.
Cole, George Kendall.
Crisler, Arthur E.
Crow, W. E.
Davis, Webster.
Davidson, J. T.
Des Moines (Iowa).
Dickey, W. S.
Dinning, Louis F.
Ditch, Goforth J.
Doe Run Lead Company.
Dunbar, Paul Laurence, 1872-1906.
Durham, S. R.
Dyer, D. P.
Elliott, William T.
Elvins, Politte.
Ernst, Joseph A.
Evangelical Alliance (Saint Louis, Mo.).
Expansionist Publishing Company.
Farrar, Douglas C.
Fenwick, Joseph F.
Filley, Chauncy I. [?].
First Presbyterian Church of Perryville (Mo.).
Fordyce, Samuel W. Jr.
Fort, J. L.
Fox, James D.
Frost, R. Graham.
Fry, W. W.
Fuson, J. W.
Gamble & Bordwell.
Gardner, A. E. L.
Gilbert, Barry.
Gilbert, Miles A.
Gilbert, Miles Frederick.
Gilbert, Miles Safford.
Gilbert, William Baker, 1837-
Gilbert, William C.
Gilster, J. Fred.
Graves, H. B.
Guignon, Jules B.
Gustin, J. D.
Hadley, Herbert Spencer, 1872-1927.
Hahn, William H.
Haile, W. T.
Halbert, L. A.
Hanna, Marcus Alonzo, 1837-1904.
Hardesty, Benson C.
Harold, Vallee.
Harvey, Charles M.
Helmbacher, M. G.
Hensley, Walter Lewis, 1871-1946.
Heuchan, Robert B.
Himmelberger, John H.
Holliday, H. N.
Horner, H. Clay (Henry Clay), 1854-1925.
Hospital No. 4 for the Insane (Farmington, Mo.).
Houck, Giboney.
Houck, Louis, 1840-1925.
Hough, Warwick.
Huck, Frank J.
Huck, Peter H.
Huff, Merrifield W.
Hunter, W. T.
Illinois Southern Railway Company.
Insurance Company of North America.
Irondale (Mo.).
Isch, Mary L.
Johnson, Edward P.
Jules Rozier and Sons Merchandise Company.
Kansas City (Mo.). Board of Public Welfare.
Kelly, Frank.
Kenner, George W.
Kennett, J. W.
Kennett, J. White.
Kiefner, Charles Edward, 1869-1942.
Killian, Charles A.
Killian, Ralph D.
Kirk, John R.
Klepzig, Charles.
Koetting, F. A.
Kreilich, August, 1863-1933.
Lake, Rush C.
Larrimore, Corinne E.
Lawbaugh, E. S.
Layton, W. Pratte.
Lederer, Simon.
Lempke, Paul L.
Levee District No. 1 (Perry County, Mo.).
Levee districts—Missouri.
Lewis, Robert E.
Linn, Paul H.
Los Angeles (Calif.).
Lunsford, Robert L.
McCoy, Joseph.
McDonald, Sarah E.
MacKenzie, William R.
McKinley, William, 1843-1901.
Maddock, Pius.
Marbury, Benjamin H.
Marshall, Albert.
Mattingly, Rowena E.
Meloan, W. A.
Mexican Coffee Trading & Planting Company of New York (Saint Louis, Mo.).
Mills & Averill Tailoring Company.
Missouri Southern Railroad Company.
Moore, Robert.
Moorehead, J. R.
Morsey, William L.
Moss, T. J., Tie Company [SEE T. J. Moss Tie Company.].
Mozley, N. A.
Mumford, F. B. (Frederick Blackmar), 1868-1947.
Munro, J. M.
Nagel, Charles.
Niedringhaus, Thomas K.
Nipper, S. G.
Noell, John V.
Oliver, Arthur L.
Optometry as a profession.
Ozmun, Edward H.
Perry County (Mo.).
Perryville, Chester and Ste. Genevieve Railroad.
Pipkin, Merrill.
Phillips, Thomas L.
Pope, John T.
Pratt, Joseph C.
Railroads and state.
Ramsey, W. B.
Rankin, Eugene C.
Religion and state.
Reppy, John H.
Republican League of the State of Missouri.
Rhodes, M. E. [?].
Rhodes, R. C.
Rivers, D. L.
Robb, Edward A.
Robinett, J. H.
Roseling, F.
Rolla (Mo.).
Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919.
Rozier, Edward Amable, 1857-1929.
Rozier, Henry L.
Rozier Jules.
Rozier, Jules, and Sons Merchandise Company [SEE Jules Rozier and
Sons Merchandise Company.
Rucker, Booker Hall
Russell, Julia Ann.
Saint Louis (Mo.)
Saint Marys (Mo.).
Sainte Genevieve County (Mo.).
Saline Valley Railroad Company.
Scanlan, J. W.
Schuarte, Fred W.
Scivally, Dennis M.
Shanks, W. D.
Shaw, Henry S.
Shriner, A. F.
Single tax.
Smith, A. S.
Smith, Charles H.
Smith, Isaac A.
Smith, M. R.
South-East Missouri Trust Company.
Southern Missouri Railway Company.
Spanish-American War, 1898.
Spencer, Selden P.
Sprigg, Ralph E.
St. Joseph Federation of Women’s Clubs (Saint Joseph, Mo.).
St. Joseph Lead Company.
St. Louis, Memphis and Southeastern Railroad Company.
St. Louis and New Orleans Anchor Line.
St. Louis and New Orleans Railroad Company.
St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad Company.
Stanton, Camille J.
Steel, George.
Stone, Charles H.
Sucher, Anthony.
T. J. Moss Tie Company.
Thomason, L. R.
Tlapek, John.
Tucker, Elliott.
United States—History—War of 1898.
United States.  Steamboat Inspection Service.
Wabash, Chester and Western Railroad.
Walsh, J. W.
Warner, William.
Washington County (Mo.).
Washington (D.C.).
Weber, Charles A.
Weber, K. W.
Weber, Kossuth C.
Weingarten (Mo.).
Whitlege, Ralph J.
Whitlege, Thomas Benson, 1844-1917.
Widlbark, Moses, -1928.
Wiggins, Charles.
Wilder, William W.
Williams, Joseph G.
Williams, Mary Tut.
Wilson, Bluford.
Wilson, Fred[?] H.
Wilson, Robert M.
Woman’s Christian Temperance Union.
Ziegenhein, Hy.