

Peter J. Smith Papers, 1920-1928

Last Modified on 09/14/2021 12:58 pm CDT

Summary Information

Title: Peter J. Smith Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1920-1928

Creator: Smith, Peter J., 1867-1947

Call Number: Eau Claire Mss U

Quantity: 0.4 c.f. (1 archives box)

Repository: Housed at the Area Research Center, William D. McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire; owned by the Wisconsin Historical Society, Library-Archives Division

Archival Locations: UW-Eau Claire McIntyre Library / Eau Claire Area Research Ctr.

Abstract: Papers of Smith, an Eau Claire, Wisconsin, Republican Party leader, consisting almost entirely of correspondence with Wisconsin progressives and with members of the Scandinavian-American Fraternity. Correspondents include Robert M. La Follette, John J. Blaine, James A. Frear, and C.N. Saugen.

Language: English

Search Terms/Subject Terms

- o Blaine, John J. (John James), 1873-1934
- o Frear, James A. (James Archibald), 1861-1939
- o La Follette, Robert M. (Robert Marion), 1855-1925
- o Saugen, Christian N., 1852-1930
- o Republican Party—Wisconsin
- o Scandinavian-American Fraternity
- o Political Parties—Wisconsin
- o Wisconsin—Politics and government o Progressivism (Wisconsin Politics)

Biography/History

Peter J. Smith was born in Denmark on August 22, 1867. His father died when Peter was only eleven and the remainder of his youth was a harsh combination of work for neighboring farmers and school. He immigrated to the United States in 1888 and immediately came to Wisconsin where a relative lived. From April 1890 to November 1902, he worked as a contractor with Northwestern Lumber Company, Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

One of the earliest members of the Scandinavian-American Fraternity, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, Smith was elected Grand Secretary in 1898. He resigned in 1903 to become a bookkeeper in the Secretary of State's office in Madison, Wisconsin. In 1904, however, he resigned this position and returned to the office of Grand Secretary. He served the Fraternity for many years, as Grand President, 1908-1918, again as Grand Secretary, 1918-1936, and as a member of the Board of Directors, 1936-1939.

Smith was also active in various aspects of government. Besides working for the State of Wisconsin in the Secretary State's office, he worked for the federal government as an assistant postmaster of Eau Claire, 1907-1916. He was an Eau Claire alderman, 1898 and 1900-1902; a member of the county board, 1918-1920; and a regent of the state normal schools, 1923-1928. In 1928, he was elected to represent the twenty-eighth district in the Wisconsin State Senate and served until 1933. After returning to Eau Claire, he was a member of the police and fire commission for several years.

An active member of the Republican Party, Smith was a progressive and a strong backer of Robert La Follette. He was chairman of the Republican county committee for four years, a member of the state central committee for a similar period, and a delegate to the Republican national convention at Cleveland in 1924.

Married in Denmark in 1888 to Ann Marie Lassen, Smith headed a family of five children: James Peter, who died in a railroad accident at age thirteen, Thomas, Martin, Adolph M., and Cassie Mary (Mrs. Orville Thompson). Mr. Smith died in Eau Claire, April 2, 1947, at age 79.

Scope and Content Note

The Papers date from 1920 to 1928 and are arranged chronologically. They consist almost entirely of incoming and outgoing correspondence, with an occasional clipping, receipt, or report. Correspondence mainly concerns Republican politics and the Scandinavian-American Fraternity and includes letters from Robert M. La Follette, John J. Blaine, James A. Frear, and C.N. Saugen.

Administrative/Restriction Information

Acquisition Information: Presented by Paul J. Smith, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, January and February 1966.

Processing Information: Processed by Karen J. Baumann, August 6, 1969.

Contents List

Box 1 Folder 1	1920
Box 1 Folder 2	1921
Box 1 Folder 3	1922
Box 1 Folder 4	1923
Box 1 Folder 5	1924
Box 1 Folder 6	1925
Box 1 Folder 7	1926
Box 1 Folder 8	1927-1928