

"WHO IS JUDGE TRUMAN?":

THE TRUMAN-FOR-GOVERNOR

MOVEMENT OF 1931

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According to his detractors, Harry S. Truman was an obscure county judge elevated to the eminence of United States Senator by the powerful Pendergast political machine. This characterization of Truman's rise in politics has received corrective revision in the work of able biographers and scholars. Far from being a political unknown when he won his first senate race in 1934, Truman had a wide circle of acquaintances in both metropolitan Kansas City and rural Missouri. Furthermore, while his success in 1934 rested to a considerable degree upon the support of Tom Pendergast's organization in Kansas City, Truman's own assets played an important role in his nomination and election to the United States Senate.<sup>1</sup>

But one important episode in Truman's rise to prominence in politics has been neglected. In 1931 friends of Jackson County's popular presiding judge participated in a movement to secure for Truman the 1932 gubernatorial nomination of Missouri Democrats.<sup>2</sup> By making both Truman and his record well known to outstate Missourians, his supporters hoped to impress leading Democrats -- especially Kansas City boss Tom Pendergast -- with the desirability of backing the judge from Independence for governor.<sup>3</sup> Truman himself took an active part in the spirited effort friends made in his behalf during the spring of 1931, but Pendergast's support and the Democratic gubernatorial nomination went to Francis M. Wilson, the party's unsuccessful nominee for governor in 1928. Although limited in scope and destined for failure, the Truman-for-Governor boom nevertheless represented a significant step upward in Truman's rise to political prominence. As a lesson in campaigning, in establishing political contacts and in making Truman as well as his reputation better known to many Missourians, the 1931 gubernatorial movement provided valuable political experience for the future president's advancing career.

The suggestion that Truman was gubernatorial timber was forwarded several months before the 1931 movement took shape. As early as September, 1929, the Clinton Eye, published in Henry County where Truman once lived as a young man, reported Truman-for-Governor sentiment.<sup>4</sup> Enthusiastic support in Truman's behalf appeared with increasing frequency during late 1930 in two "home-town" newspapers, the Independence Examiner and the Blue Valley Inter-City News. The latter Jackson County newspapers

did more than report growing interest in a Truman gubernatorial candidacy; their editorials helped create the sentiment which was to develop into the Truman-for-Governor movement in 1931.<sup>5</sup>

The conviction of newspapermen and close political associates of Truman that he deserved consideration for Missouri's chief executive office stemmed directly from the outstanding leadership Truman displayed as presiding judge of the Jackson County Court. The Truman-led court -- responsible for the administration of county government rather than the performance of judicial duties -- had attained a well-deserved reputation for honesty, imagination and efficiency. Admirers singled out for most praise Truman's sponsorship and supervision of the county's \$6,500,000 road building program. Under his guidance Jackson County built the best road system of any county in Missouri during the 1920's.<sup>6</sup>

Actually, Truman's interest in good roads was only one important part of his larger concern for the planned development of the Kansas City metropolitan area. As a result of this concern Truman emerged as a leading promoter of a greater Kansas City and Jackson County. He demonstrated his leadership in organizing and presiding over the Regional Plan Association of Greater Kansas City during the late twenties. Even earlier Truman's interest in road building and city planning had won him leadership positions in several national organizations. In 1924 he assumed the presidency of the National Old Trails Association, a group concerned with both the historical marking of old roads and the development of new highways. In the summer of 1930 he was elected a director of the National Conference of City Planning and a member of the exclusive American Civic Association.<sup>7</sup>

These impressive credentials brought Truman backing from Republicans as well as Democrats when he ran for a second term as presiding judge in 1930. "Efficient, unselfish public service is not so common that it should be dispensed with merely for partisan reasons," commented the Republican Kansas City Star in announcing its support of Truman's bid for re-election. The Democratic Blue Valley Inter-City News endorsement was less restrained: "Rarely is a man of such high and unusual qualities found in public office." After voters boosted him to the top of the Democratic ticket with a 58,000 plurality in the November, 1930, election, the Independence Examiner concluded that Truman's service had been of "such an unusual and outstanding nature that the voters gave it special recognition."<sup>8</sup>

The first indication that Jackson Countians were giving serious thought to a systematic promotion of Truman for governor came in a post-election editorial of the Independence Examiner. Because local Democrats had compiled large majorities in the recent elections, reasoned Examiner editor William M. Southern, Jr., politicians would inevitably look to Jackson County for state candidates. In many quarters since the election, Southern observed, Judge Harry S. Truman had been suggested "of ability sufficient to reflect credit on the county in the governor's chair." Indeed, the editor

concluded, "Judge Truman would carry to the governor's chair a fine ability and understanding which would make him a splendid executive."<sup>9</sup> The neighboring Blue Valley Inter-City News quickly seconded Southern's suggestion. "If everyone in this state knew Judge Truman as well as Jackson County knows him," predicted the News, "Harry Truman for governor would be more than a possibility, it would be a reality."<sup>10</sup>

Initiation of outstate newspaper publicity to make Truman better known in rural Missouri began shortly after his re-election as presiding judge. Several of Truman's Jackson County friends journeyed to adjoining Lafayette County to arrange with Odessa Democrat editor A. J. Adair, a known admirer of the judge, editorial backing for a Truman gubernatorial candidacy.<sup>11</sup> The November 14, 1930, issue of the Democrat displayed these efforts. Featured on the weekly's front page was a picture of Truman and a two-column story headlined "Truman Could Be Next Governor, Jackson County Judge Would Be An Ideal Democratic Candidate."

The major figure among Truman's friends who hoped to translate this journalistic sentiment into political reality was Colonel Ralph E. Truman of Kansas City. Ralph Truman was Harry's first cousin, but the judge's alter-ego would be a more apt description of the Colonel's relationship during the movement of 1931. Although he lacked influence in Democratic politics, Colonel Truman had several attributes to commend him in the promotion of his cousin's political career. A high-ranking Missouri National Guard officer and prominent member of the American Legion, Ralph Truman could enlist the potential political support for Truman among these groups that also knew the judge as a popular reserve officer and Legionnaire. Moreover, as a recent resident of Springfield, Colonel Truman had friends in southwest Missouri willing to align themselves with a gubernatorial candidate from the Kansas City area.<sup>12</sup>

Liaison between Judge Truman's Jackson County supporters and Springfield Democrats was begun by Ralph Truman in April, 1931. Colonel Truman persuaded his close friend, former Army officer and fellow Legionnaire James E. Ruffin, to head a Truman-for-Governor movement in the southwest counties. Ruffin, a young Springfield lawyer destined for election to Congress in 1932, was not immediately receptive to the request since he did not know Harry Truman personally and had only a limited knowledge of the judge's administrative record. Convinced by the Colonel that Judge Truman was gubernatorial timber, Ruffin agreed to call together Democratic leaders of southwest Missouri to interest them in endorsing the Jackson Countian for governor.<sup>13</sup>

At a Springfield meeting in early May, 1931, fifty-two representative Democrats from fifteen counties of Southwest Missouri heard Colonel Truman and Ruffin advance the candidacy of Judge Truman. Before the meeting concluded the group endorsed the Jackson County judge and organized the "Truman-for-Governor Club of southwest Missouri."<sup>14</sup> Ruffin, named

president of the club, was directed to take immediate steps to appoint men and women vice-presidents in the several southwest counties. "The Truman-for-Governor Club," Ruffin wrote potential members, "[does] not consist of a bunch of kids or soldiers exclusively, but . . . some of the oldest and most substantial Democratic leaders in Southwest and South central Missouri."<sup>15</sup>

Although the political aspirations of others remained in the background at the Springfield meeting,<sup>16</sup> the group of attending politicians gave clear expression to their conviction that Democrats should not give a second nomination to the party's unsuccessful nominee in 1928, Francis M. Wilson of Platte City. The sixty-four year old Wilson had been sidelined by an operation during the 1928 fall campaign; despite reports of his declining health, many expected the Platte Countian to seek renomination in 1932. Yet if Democrats were to recapture the governorship after a decade of Republican rule, the Springfield group believed, an energetic campaigner was needed. "Everyone seemed to think," Ruffin explained to friends, "that we should have a younger candidate for governor and that he should come from the Kansas City territory."<sup>17</sup> Thus it followed that the forty-seven year old Truman, Jackson County's most popular public official, deserved the backing of Missouri Democrats for governor.

The major problem for Truman's supporters was that of convincing top Democratic leadership and other gubernatorial aspirants as well as the party rank and file that their candidate was potentially the strongest contender for the governorship. The Truman strategists sensed that if their movement gained sufficient momentum outstate, the aging Wilson might forego a grueling contest for renomination. In that event, Pendergast, freed from any commitment to support Wilson in 1932 as he did in 1928, might be easily persuaded to give his organization's support to Judge Truman. Since Wilson's and Pendergast's political intentions remained unknown at the outset of the formal Truman movement, continued silence on their part would permit the judge's backers to conduct an imaginative if limited publicity campaign designed to make him the first choice of Missouri Democrats for the gubernatorial nomination.<sup>18</sup>

Since time was of the essence, Ruffin and Colonel Truman quickly busied themselves with the task of making both Truman and his judgeship record better known to rural Missourians. A June rally in Houston, county seat of Texas County in the southern Ozarks, was planned as the first of three major meetings designed to introduce Truman to outstate voters.<sup>19</sup> A personality sketch of Judge Truman in a Sunday issue of the Kansas City Star in late May probably appeared as a result of Colonel Truman's influence with a friend on the newspaper's staff.<sup>20</sup> While this informative article reached thousands of the Star's readers in western Missouri, Ruffin sought still other means to familiarize Missourians with Judge Truman. At his request Truman's secretaries copied editorials from area newspapers

extolling the Truman record on the Jackson County Court. Ruffin desired reproductions of these clippings along with pictures of the gubernatorial hopeful to distribute to Truman-for-Governor committeemen and newspaper editors. "These clippings will carry considerable weight," Ruffin commented, ". . . because they certainly cover, effectively, the points which everyone wants to know."<sup>21</sup>

Truman himself began to shift from an approving, passive role to that of an active, though careful, participant in the movement to make him the Democratic gubernatorial candidate. On May 31, he motored to Henry County to address members of the Clinton American Legion post. According to the local newspaper, Truman confined his remarks to praise for the Legion's work in the Clinton community, but the actual purpose of his visit, a resident wrote Francis Wilson, was to start a boom for governor.<sup>22</sup> While in the Springfield area prior to the Houston rally, Truman attended a meeting of American Legion executives in Monett, and at nearby Pierce City he conferred with fellow officers of the Missouri National Guard. Both meetings had been arranged to acquaint Truman's friends in these organizations with his political aspirations.<sup>23</sup> According to General William A. Raupp, commanding general of the Missouri National Guard, Truman did not need to campaign for the support of guardsmen. If he made the race for governor, Raupp told Truman, he would order "white and black" Republicans to vote for him.<sup>24</sup> These contacts and promises of support for Truman in Guard and Legion circles were valuable, of course, but they would be of limited value without the support of Tom Pendergast's powerful machine in Kansas City.

An endorsement from Pendergast, though, was not forthcoming. As he left Kansas City in late May of 1931 for a three months' vacation in Europe, Tom Pendergast's statement to the press removed all doubts surrounding his first choice for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination: "I will say right now, so there will be no misunderstanding," Boss Pendergast told inquiring newsmen, "that we will support Francis Wilson for the Democratic nomination for governor . . . provided Wilson makes the race."<sup>25</sup> Judging by the participation of close Pendergast associates in the Truman movement as well as Truman's own involvement, there obviously had been much misunderstanding concerning Pendergast's attitude toward a trial heat among gubernatorial hopefuls.<sup>26</sup> But if Pendergast had an open mind toward all potential candidates before the Truman movement began, his statement as he departed for Europe seemed to close the door on organization backing of the judge.

Still the Pendergast statement of support for Wilson could hardly have been unanticipated by Truman boosters, since several factors operated in Wilson's behalf. An old friend of Pendergast, the Platte Countian could count on this personal tie to win him continued political support. Moreover, while Missouri Democrats might raise doubts about Wilson's physical abil-

ity to make a forceful campaign in 1932, the 1928 gubernatorial nominee still had considerable political strength in rural Missouri, a factor that carried much weight with the Kansas City boss. In the 1928 primary contest Wilson had carried 110 of the state's 114 counties in defeating his major opponent, State Senator Alfred M. McCawley. And while the Hoover landslide was too much for Missouri Democrats in 1928, Wilson led the state and national ticket in his losing contest with Henry S. Caulfield.<sup>27</sup> Now assured of Pendergast support, Wilson had only to satisfy himself and skeptical Democrats that his health would permit the waging of a second campaign for governor in 1932.

In the absence of any concrete evidence from Wilson himself that he would seek the gubernatorial nomination a second time, the Truman rally set for June 6 in Houston remained scheduled. Arranged for a Saturday night when farmers would be in the small county seat town for their weekly shopping and socializing, the Houston meeting would mark Truman's first public speaking appearance in connection with the gubernatorial campaign his friends had been waging in his interest.<sup>28</sup> "This meeting," Truman-for-Governor Club President James Ruffin wrote Colonel Truman, "will really get the ball rolling in this section of the state."<sup>29</sup> Ruffin's letter of invitation to Harry Truman, whom Ruffin was yet to meet personally, provides a more realistic assessment of the judge's opportunity:

I think that your appearance . . . will stimulate interest and help the party generally, as well as afford an opportunity to get in personal contact with the democratic [sic] leaders of this section. . . . You have many friends here now, and I know that you will make more as you meet the people.<sup>30</sup>

This letter and possibly suggestions made by his cousin may have provided Truman the topic for his Houston speech,<sup>31</sup> for essentially his brief remarks there answered the question, "Who is Judge Truman?" In the careful manner that characterized all of his actions in the movement in his behalf, Truman insisted at the outset of his talk that he was "in no sense a candidate." But if the situation should develop, he conceded, Missourians "might find me ready at their command to enter the lists." Then briefly outlining his life, Truman modestly recounted his childhood on the farm, education, commercial and farming experiences and his service in the artillery during the World War. Highlighting the account was a description of his work on the Jackson County Court. Truman obviously wanted to emphasize that part of his career that had brought him support from both close associates and those who knew him only through his record in public administration.<sup>32</sup>

Reaction to Truman's Houston appearance was mixed. In the opinion of a West Plains editor and Wilson supporter, the meeting was a "frost." Truman had not "hit the bull's eye." "He is a fine fellow," the newspaper-

man concluded, "but not one around whom the one gallus Democracy of this section would rally."<sup>33</sup> But Truman did not pose as an orator, a Springfield Press reporter observed. It was the judge's "straight-forward, logical, and businesslike manner . . ." that enabled Truman to make "an exceptionally favorable impression" upon his Houston audience.<sup>34</sup> The Houston Herald editor concurred in this evaluation, viewing Truman as a "clean, conscientious businessman who would render unto the people a real business administration if chosen Governor."<sup>35</sup> Although a threatening storm helped limit the audience to an estimated two hundred persons, Ruffin was pleased that a representative gathering of area Democrats had come to Houston to hear and meet Truman. Truman himself expressed satisfaction and even delight with the rally and its coverage by Springfield newspapers.<sup>36</sup>

The basic problem for the Truman-for-Governor movement, of course, still remained after the Houston rally: Wilson must be kept out of the race in order for Pendergast support to shift to Truman. That Truman still held hope Wilson might not seek renomination in 1932 is evident from his actions in late June of 1931. Plans for a rally in northern Missouri similar to the one at Houston were being made, Truman informed Ruffin, and picnic and homecoming speaking engagements that would bring him more public exposure had been accepted in several western Missouri communities.<sup>37</sup> This activity might persuade Wilson to drop his plans for renomination. "If you can get [Wilson] out of the way," Ruffin wrote Truman, "I think you can win the nomination with very little difficulty."<sup>38</sup>

Wilson, however, had no intention of abandoning his ambition to become Missouri's chief executive. His inactivity during the early weeks of the Truman movement apparently was based on an awareness that Pendergast would eventually declare publicly his support of Wilson's renomination. Wilson could, therefore, correctly appraise the Democratic gubernatorial situation in a mid-May letter to a worried Springfield supporter. It was unlikely that Truman would be a candidate, Wilson observed, "in view of his high connection with the Pendergast wing of the party," for Truman "was not the kind of man to defy his own organization." When it became clear that he intended to seek renomination, Wilson concluded, Truman would bring his activities to a close.<sup>39</sup> Early in July, 1931, after a personal survey of northeastern Missouri revealed to Wilson that sentiment for his renomination ran strong in that area, he confidently predicted to concerned friends that Truman would not be a candidate "when the time comes for filing."<sup>40</sup>

It was essentially in this quiet, undramatic way that the Truman-for-Governor movement ended. Recognizing that the Pendergast-backed Wilson was determined to make the race in 1932, Truman realistically abandoned his own efforts to win the nomination. By November, 1931, leading Truman supporters such as James E. Ruffin had joined the Wilson camp, and the following month Truman personally advised Wilson that the Platte

City Democrat could expect his "wholehearted support."<sup>41</sup> Not unexpectedly, Wilson rolled to a 90,000 vote victory over State Senator Russell Dearmont of Cape Girardeau in the August, 1932, primary election.

Ironically, Wilson's health, a factor that had prompted much of the opposition to the Platte Citizen in early 1931, broke down in the fall campaign, and on October 12, 1932, the Democratic gubernatorial nominee died.<sup>42</sup> Immediately the names of several prominent Missourians were advanced in the press as possible successors to Wilson. William Southern, Jr.'s Independence Examiner urged the selection of Judge Truman, but Tom Pendergast and other influential Democrats ignored this suggestion.<sup>43</sup> There is no evidence that members of the State Democratic Committee, charged under state law with the responsibility for naming a new gubernatorial nominee, gave consideration to Truman. A power struggle between Pendergast Democrats and the supporters of United States senatorial nominee Bennett Clark was probably a major factor in the selection of a colorless compromise candidate, Guy M. Park of Platte City, a close associate of Francis Wilson and a party regular. Unlike Truman and several other Democrats passed over by the state committee, Park had supported Wilson for governor and Clark for senator in the Democratic primary; therefore, he was acceptable to both Pendergast and Clark factions of Missouri Democrats.<sup>44</sup>

Viewed in its failure to supplant Wilson, and then upon Wilson's death to win consideration from the State Democratic Committee as his replacement, the Truman-for-Governor movement was a failure. But if other standards are used to measure the efforts of the movement, it was a valuable political experience in Truman's advancing career. The short-lived gubernatorial campaign deepened the political ties Truman already enjoyed with such powerful groups as the American Legion and the Missouri National Guard. The movement widened Truman's growing circle of friends outstate, especially among influential Democratic newspaper editors and leaders of grass-roots democracy. Moreover, the gubernatorial boom brought Truman into contact with persons who either had no previous knowledge of the Jackson County judge or knew him only by his reputation. Truman's friendship with 1932 Congressman-elect James E. Ruffin, formed during the movement of 1931, is a notable case in point.

Finally, the movement afforded Truman an opportunity to demonstrate continued loyalty to the Pendergast organization. When hoped-for Pendergast support failed to come his way, Truman wisely placed loyalty to the organization ahead of his own unfolding political aspirations. These prudent policies, as well as his high standing with rural Democrats, enabled Truman to become the recipient of Tom Pendergast's support for the United States senatorial nomination in 1934. Combined outstate and Kansas City backing were vital for Truman's nomination and election to the United States Senate that year.



"Judge Truman is a mighty fine man," Francis Wilson wrote a friend in 1931 after he learned that Truman would support his candidacy. "I trust some day to see him elevated to other offices of trust."<sup>45</sup> Neither Wilson nor Truman, though, could have known that the political career of Jackson County's presiding judge was destined to culminate, not in the governor's mansion in Jefferson City, but in the White House in Washington.

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#### Footnotes:

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<sup>1</sup> Contemporary accounts in metropolitan dailies at the time Truman was first nominated to the Senate originated the idea that a political unknown had won only because he had the backing of the Pendergast organization. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch of August 8, 1934, headlined its article on the senatorial nominee, "Career of Truman, Former Rail Hand," and on its editorial page commented that "the candidate has been a County Judge, scarcely known outside the confines of Jackson County." The paper regretted that "an obscure man can be made the nominee of a major political party for the high office of United States Senator by virtue of the support given him by a city boss." In its August 8, 1934, issue the St. Louis Globe-Democrat regarded Truman "a more or less obscure County Judge." The Kansas City Star reported that "while Judge Truman is not well known throughout the state, he is favorably known in Kansas City." The Star acknowledged that Truman's "attractive personality" as well as Pendergast support played a role in the judge's successful senatorial primary race. Editorial, Kansas City Star, August 8, 1934. Jonathan Daniels' The Man of Independence (Philadelphia, 1950), the best biography of Truman, presents evidence that Truman was generally well known outstate when he made his first race for the Senate, 169-173. See also Gene Schmittlein, "Truman's First Senatorial Election," Missouri Historical Review, LVII (January, 1963), 136-137.

<sup>2</sup> Daniels' The Man of Independence mentions but does not elaborate the activity in behalf of a Truman gubernatorial candidacy. See 153, 155, 168; Truman himself omits an account of this episode in his memoirs, Years of Decisions (Garden City, 1948), I. As might be expected, only limited coverage of the Truman-for-Governor movement appeared in the major St. Louis and Kansas City newspapers. See the Kansas City Star, April 24 and May 24, 1931, and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 28, 1931.

<sup>3</sup> In Missouri politics, "outstate" customarily refers to nonmetropolitan Missouri outside of St. Louis City and County and Kansas City-Jackson County. In this paper the term is used in a more restricted sense, referring particularly to the western half of the state outside of Jackson County, thus conforming to Missouri's dominant political pattern of the 1920's and early 1930's. During that time Republicans tended to dominate St. Louis and eastern Missouri while Tom Pendergast's efficient Kansas City organization helped make Jackson County and western Missouri Democratic. This partly explains why Democratic politicians often sought Pendergast's endorsement and concentrated their efforts upon Kansas City and western counties. See John H. Fenton, Politics in the Border States (New Orleans, 1957), 136-141.

<sup>4</sup> The Clinton Eye in its September 19, 1929, issue applauded the efforts of the Henry County Association in Kansas City for sponsoring "that splendid young Henry Countian, Judge Truman, for Governor of Missouri." The Independence Examiner quoted with approval this suggestion from Henry County. Editorial, Independence Examiner, September 27, 1929.

<sup>5</sup> Frequent support in behalf of a Truman gubernatorial candidacy appeared in the Examiner's editorials and in editor William M. Southern, Jr.'s front-page column, "In Missouri Language." According to Sue Gentry, long-time member of the Examiner staff, Mr. Truman once said, "Colonel Southern sent me to the Senate." Letter to author, June 29, 1965. Probably the first extensive editorial support of Truman for governor is that of Stanley R. Fike in the Blue Valley Inter-City News. Consult Southern's column and editorials for November 7, 1930, and the Inter-City News for November 14, 1930, and subsequent editorials in the two papers through June, 1931.

The historian delving into Truman's early career must rely heavily upon newspapers. There are no papers pertaining to Truman's pre-senatorial career in the Truman Library; furthermore, the oral history interviews now available at the Library have not been useful for this aspect of Truman's experience. I am grateful to J. R. Fuchs of the Truman Library's Oral History Project for supplying me the lead to the Clinton Eye's early endorsement of Truman for governor. Richard S. Kirkendall of the University of Missouri informed me of Stanley Fike's editorials in the Blue Valley Inter-City News.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. See especially Blue Valley Inter-City News editorials of January 9 and 30, June 12, 1931.

<sup>7</sup> Blue Valley Inter-City News, July 3, 1930; editorials, Independence Examiner, June 27 and July 12, 1930; Truman, Memoirs, I, 140-147.

<sup>8</sup> Editorial, Kansas City Times, October 17, 1930; editorial, Blue Valley Inter-City News, October 10, 1930; editorial, Independence Examiner, November 17, 1930.

<sup>9</sup> Column, "In Missouri Language," Independence Examiner, November 7, 1930.

<sup>10</sup> Editorial, Blue Valley Inter-City News, November 21, 1930.

<sup>11</sup> Y. D. Adair to author, May 21, 1965. Unfortunately, the names of Adair's Jackson County callers are unknown to his son. Y. D. Adair to author, July 2, 1965.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with James E. Ruffin, June 10, 1965. Biographical sketches of Colonel Truman appear in the Kansas City Times, May 1, 1962, and the Springfield Daily News, May 4, 1962. Although the Trumans broke off their friendship in 1934 when Colonel Truman served as a campaign manager for Jacob L. Milligan, one of Truman's opponents for the senatorial nomination, their warm relationship was later restored. When Truman attended Ralph Truman's funeral in May, 1962, he remarked, "I was as close to him as if he had been a brother." Springfield Daily News, May 4, 1962. It is interesting to note that many Missourians in 1931 thought that the two men were brothers. See, for example, the Springfield Press, May 6, 1931.

<sup>13</sup> Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1949 (Washington, 1950), 1764; interview with Ruffin, June 10, 1965.

<sup>14</sup> Springfield Leader, May 5, 1931.

<sup>15</sup> James E. Ruffin to P. T. O'Brien, May 7, 1931. Ruffin singled out W. L. Hiatt and Kirby Lamar of Houston, Bob Lamar of Mountain Grove, Harold Stewart of Polk County and Tom B. Hembree of Stockton as prominent area Democrats in attendance at the Springfield meeting. Ruffin to Robert Stemmons, May 5, 1931. All of the letters to and from Ruffin cited in this article are in the possession of Mr. Ruffin.

<sup>16</sup> Ruffin, for example, did not associate his own aspirations to go to Congress with the Truman gubernatorial movement, and he did not declare his intention to seek nomination until several months after the collapse of the movement. However, Ruffin did receive important support from the Kansas City organization in his successful bid for one of the at-large nominations in the 1932 primary. Springfield Leader, May 6, 1931; Fenton, Politics in the Border States, 38.

<sup>17</sup> Springfield Leader, May 5 and 6, 1931; Ruffin to Ernest Mayberry, May 5, 1931; Ruffin to P. T. O'Brien, May 7, 1931; Ruffin to Frank Kirtley, May 7, 1931.

<sup>18</sup> Springfield Leader, May 6 and June 1, 1931.

<sup>19</sup> Ruffin to P. T. O'Brien, May 7, 1931; Ruffin to Frank Kirtley, May 7, 1931.

<sup>20</sup> Kansas City Star, May 24, 1931; Ralph E. Truman to Ruffin, May 8, 1931.

<sup>21</sup> These editorials, typed on stationery of the Jackson County Court, are in the possession of Ruffin. Ralph E. Truman to Ruffin, May 8 and 9,

1931; Ruffin to Ralph E. Truman, May 11, 1931; Ruffin to Robert Lamar, May 11, 1931.

<sup>22</sup> Clinton Eye, June 4, 1931; Mrs. Harve Gray to Francis M. Wilson, June 14, 1931, Folder 528, Francis M. Wilson Papers, Western Historical Manuscripts Collection, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

<sup>23</sup> Ruffin to P. T. O'Brien, June 2, 1931; Ruffin to Raymond Shoemaker, June 3, 1931; Springfield Press, June 4, 1931.

<sup>24</sup> Ralph E. Truman to Ruffin, May 8, 1931.

<sup>25</sup> Kansas City Star, May 31, 1931.

<sup>26</sup> Further evidence that Truman supporters operated under the assumption that Pendergast could be persuaded eventually to back Truman's candidacy appears in James Bradshaw's Kansas City Daily Democrat. Bradshaw's paper, a generally reliable disseminator of Pendergast's views, editorialized on November 12, 1930, that the boss had no favorites for governor: "Always he wants the strongest candidates, who ever they may be -- men who can win." The same editorial, however, suggested that the Kansas City organization "put its stamp of approval upon Francis M. Wilson before other ambitious candidates up with announcements of their intentions." Throughout the winter and spring of 1931 the Daily Democrat urged Wilson's renomination. Pendergast Democrats who nevertheless continued to boost Truman for governor included R. Emmett O'Malley, business associate of Pendergast, and Fred Boxley, Jackson County Counselor. These men traveled with Truman to Houston for the June rally held there. Springfield Press, May 6, 1931.

<sup>27</sup> Kansas City Daily Democrat, May 12, June 8, 10 and 18, 1931; State of Missouri, Official Manual of Missouri, 1929-1930 (Jefferson City, n. d.), 238, 431. A biographical account of Wilson appears in Walter William's Missouri, Mother of the West (Chicago, 1930), IV, 111.

<sup>28</sup> Enroute to the Houston meeting, Truman made nonspeaking stops in Mountain Grove and Cabool. Springfield Press, June 6, 1931; editorial, Mountain Grove Journal, June 4, 1931.

<sup>29</sup> Ruffin to Ralph E. Truman, May 29, 1931.

<sup>30</sup> Ruffin to Harry S. Truman, June 1, 1931.

<sup>31</sup> Several days before the Houston meeting, Ralph E. Truman requested of Perry Allen, a Springfield lawyer, and Ruffin ideas for "a good subject for Harry to talk on." Ralph E. Truman to Ruffin, May 8, 1931.

<sup>32</sup> A large portion of Truman's speech is printed in the Springfield Press, June 9, 1931. The Press captioned its picture of Truman: "Spotlight -- Here He Is."

<sup>33</sup> Will H. Zorn to Francis M. Wilson, August 8, 1931, Folder 545, Wilson Papers.

<sup>34</sup> Springfield Press, June 9, 1931.

<sup>35</sup> Houston Herald, June 11, 1931; editorial, ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Springfield Press, June 9, 1931. Interview with Ruffin, June 10, 1965. Harry S. Truman to Ruffin, June 12, 1931. "I received the copy of the Springfield Press," Truman wrote Ruffin, "and I don't see how you boys did it. I never can get thru expressing my gratitude for the pleasant time shown me in Springfield and Houston and I sincerely hope I can do something both personally and politically to repay you." The Ruffin-Truman correspondence after the Houston rally no longer carried the formal salutation of "Dear Mr. Ruffin" and "Dear Judge Truman," but the more familiar "Dear Jim" and "Dear Harry."

<sup>37</sup> Harry S. Truman to Ruffin, June 19 and 29, 1931.

<sup>38</sup> Ruffin to Harry S. Truman, June 15, 1931.

<sup>39</sup> Francis M. Wilson to J. W. McCammon, May 18, 1931, Folder 488, Wilson Papers.

<sup>40</sup> Francis M. Wilson to W. F. Schlicht, July 11, 1931, Folder 910, Wilson Papers.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Ruffin, June 10, 1965; Springfield Daily Press, November 18, 1931; Francis M. Wilson to Charles W. Dickey, December 10, 1931, Folder 492, Wilson Papers.

<sup>42</sup> State of Missouri, Official Manual of Missouri, 1933-1934 (Jefferson City, n. d.), 402-403.

<sup>43</sup> Column, "In Missouri Language," October 13, 1932; editorials, October 14 and 17, 1932, Independence Examiner.

<sup>44</sup> Truman, as a Pendergast Democrat, supported the Kansas City organization's choice for United States Senator, Charles M. Howell. See Franklin D. Mitchell, "Embattled Democracy: Missouri Democratic Politics, 1918-1932," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri, 1964, 275 ff.

<sup>45</sup> Wilson to Charles W. Dickey, December 10, 1931, Folder 492, Wilson Papers.