

Missouri State Archives

Finding Aid [998.435]

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

Marie Oliver State Flag Collection

Abstract: Photographs, publications and documents pertaining to the State Flag, Mrs. Marie Elizabeth Watkins Oliver, her family and home. Oliver designed the official Missouri State Flag in 1913.

Extent: 0.05 Cubic Feet

Physical Description: Photographs; Paper; Monographs

Location: Missouri State Archives; Stacks

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Alternative Formats: TIFs of the photographs

Access Restrictions: None

Publication Restrictions: Standard copyright rules apply

Preferred Citation: [item description], [date]; *Marie Oliver State Flag Collection*, Record Group 998.435; Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City.

Acquisition Information: Gifts; Accession #1995-0195, #2020-0092, #2021-0163 & #2022-0117

Processing Information: Finding aid completed by EW on 09/08/2021. Updated by EW on 05/25/2022.

HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

On March 22, 1913, nearly 100 years after achieving statehood, Missouri adopted an official flag. The flag was designed by Mrs. Marie Elizabeth Watkins Oliver, wife of former State Senator Robert B. Oliver. The Olivers' nephew, Sen. Arthur L. Oliver, introduced a bill to the General Assembly in 1909, 1911 and again in 1913 when it was finally adopted. The flag consists of three horizontal stripes of red, white and blue: the three colors of the United States

flag. The Missouri coat of arms is centered over the stripes and encircled by a blue band containing 24 stars, which denotes that Missouri was the 24th state to join the Union.

Oliver's original proposed flag burned in the February 5, 1911 Capitol Building fire. She made a second one in or around 1913. Edith MacFarland of Cape Girardeau hand-painted the coat of arms in the center of Oliver's silk flag.

Marie Oliver's 1913 flag was donated to the Missouri Secretary of State (SOS) in 1961 by the Olivers' son Allen. It was displayed in the Capitol Building from 1961 to 1980 when it was removed because of its fragile condition. Eight years later, SOS Roy Blunt, with the help of a penny drive by Missouri's elementary school students, sent the flag to a conservator for restoration and conservation. Today, the original state flag is displayed permanently in the lobby of the James C. Kirkpatrick State Information Center in Jefferson City.

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

Related Collections

See RG005 SOS Publications Vanishing Missouri Collection for a photo of the Oliver family c1882: <https://cdm16795.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16795coll30/id/549/rec/1>.

See RG005 SOS Records Services Photograph Collection for photographs of the flag on display in the JCKSIC lobby.

See RG5.42 Roy Blunt, 1985-1993 for documents and additional photographs of the conservation work on the flag.

See RG110 Department of Natural Resources National Register of Historic Places Collection for the paperwork on the Oliver-Leming House in Cape Girardeau: <https://mostateparks.com/sites/mostateparks/files/Oliver-Leming%20House.pdf>.

SOS State Symbols website: <https://www.sos.mo.gov/symbol/flag>.

Vertical File

Additional External Resources

Collections at The State Historical Society of Missouri:

C2689 Marie Oliver Watkins Papers: <https://files.shsmo.org/manuscripts/columbia/C2689.pdf>

C3737 Oliver Family Papers: <https://files.shsmo.org/manuscripts/columbia/C3731.pdf>

Historic Missourians website: <https://historicmissourians.shsmo.org/marie-watkins-oliver>.

Oliver, Allen L. "The Missouri State Flag." *Missouri Historical Review*, 52 no. 1 (October 1957): 35-39.

<http://digital.shsmo.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/mhr/id/26374/show/26308>.

Oliver, Robert Burret. "History of the State Flag of Missouri." *Missouri Historical Review*, 13 no. 3 (April 1919): 226-231.

<http://digital.shsmo.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/mhr/id/6806/show/6707>.

Soodalter, Ron. "The History of Missouri's Flag." *Missouri Life Magazine*, July 11, 2019.

<https://missourilife.com/the-history-of-missouris-flag/>

Series

Photographs, c1943-c1992

Note, c1944

Publications, 1957-1994

Photographs, c1943-c1992

Extent: 4 Photographs

Arrangement: Chronological

Scope and Content

Photographs of Mrs. Marie Elizabeth Watkins Oliver, designer of the Missouri State Flag, her family and home. All photographs have been digitized and are available on the Z Drive as well as Manuscript DVD #7.

Container List

Location	Box	Folder	Contents	Date
	214	28	Studio portrait of Marie Watkins Oliver. 8"x10" b&w copy print.	c1943-1944
	214	29	Studio portrait of Marie Watkins Oliver holding the Missouri State Flag she created. 8"x10" b&w copy print. (See also Publications Non-Portrait Collection RG005_77_29_0723.tif for a duplicate image.)	c1943-1944
	214	30	<i>Jefferson City News Tribune</i> photograph. Caption reads, "Warren E. Hearnes, secretary of state, Gov. John M. Dalton and Allen L. Oliver carefully display the fragile original State Flag of Missouri after dedication ceremonies today. Hearnes accepted the flag from Oliver, son of the late Mrs. Marie Elizabeth Watkins Oliver, who created it in 1908. Dedication ceremonies were conducted in a special joint session of the Senate and House of Representatives at the Capitol this morning." (See accession paperwork for full article.) 10"x8" b&w copy print. Photo by News Tribune.	06/14/1961
	214	31	Image of the Oliver home where Marie Watkins Oliver lived when she created Missouri's state flag. The house is located at 740 North Street, Cape Girardeau and is on the National Register of Historic Places. 10"x8" color original print. Photo by Lueders Studio, Cape Girardeau, MO.	c1992

Note, 1944

Extent: 1 Item

Arrangement: N/a

Scope and Content

Before the flag was donated to the State in 1961, it was formally dedicated in a ceremony in Jefferson City on May 1, 1944. Gov. Forrest C. Donnell and Supreme Court Judges James M. Douglas and Albert M. Clark spoke at the ceremony. Mrs. Oliver, age 90, was too ill to attend the ceremony; thus, her sons stood in her place. The Olivers took the flag home after the dedication.

Container List

Location	Box	Folder	Contents	Date
	214	31B	Handwritten note on the history of the flag as of 1944. Writer unknown. Donated to the Archives in 2019.	05/01/1944

Publications, 1957-1994

Extent: 0.05 Cubic Feet

Arrangement: Chronological

Scope and Content

This series consists of publications and charts of Marie Watkins Oliver's family genealogy. The first item, *"Tearin' through the Wilderness,"* is a hardbound volume published by Helen Watkins with a posthumous credit to Marie Oliver Watkins. The bookplate dated 13 April 1993 reads in part, "presented to the State of Missouri in memory of Marie Watkins Oliver who was the author and designer of the Missouri State Flag. Presented by Lois Scurlock Watkins (Mrs. Allen Rives Watkins) and the Daughters of the American Revolution of Missouri and members of the family." The second item is an update to the first made by Mary Watkins Bhuta. Finally, there are two pedigree charts of the Ryves/Rives family, ancestors to the Watkinses.

Container List

Location	Box	Folder	Contents	Date
	209	6	<i>"Tearin' through the Wilderness" Missouri Pioneer Episodes 1822-1885 and Genealogy of the Watkins Family of Virginia and Missouri</i> by Marie Oliver Watkins and Helen (Hamacher) Watkins	1957
	209	7	<i>Genealogy of the Watkins Family of Virginia and Missouri from 1957 to 1994: An Update to "Tearin' through the Wilderness"</i> compiled and edited by Mary Watkins Bhuta	1994
	Dra wer 5	7	Two genealogical charts, taped-together photocopies. a) CHART I The Pedigree of RYVES of Damory Court, and Ranston, co. Dorset. Measures 26.25"x11.125". b) CHART II Pedigree of Rives of Virginia. Measures 38.875"x17.125".	n.d.