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Department of State  
**Tennessee State Library and Archives**  
403 Seventh Avenue North  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0312

**PATTERSON, MALCOLM RICE**  
**(1861 – 1935)**  
**PAPERS**  
**ca. 1895-1935**

*Processed by:*

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## INTRODUCTION

This collection is composed of some of the papers of Malcolm Rice Patterson, Governor of Tennessee, 1907-1911; United States Representative from Tennessee, 1901-1906; judge of the first Circuit Court of Shelby County, Tennessee, 1923-1934; district attorney of Shelby County, 1894-1900; lawyer; columnist; lecturer; and, in later life, advocate of temperance causes. These papers were given to the Manuscript section of the Tennessee State Library and Archives by Mrs. Mary Gardner Patterson Phillips of Memphis, Tennessee, a daughter of Governor Patterson.

The materials in this finding aid measure 2.94 linear feet. There are approximately 2,000 items and 2 volumes included in this collection.

There are no restrictions on the materials. Single photocopies of unpublished writings in the Malcolm Rice Patterson Papers may be made for purposes of scholarly research.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Malcolm Rice Patterson papers, containing approximately 2,000 items and two volumes, are dated from about 1895 through 1935. Most of them relate to Patterson's political career, with special emphasis on his gubernatorial campaigns of 1906, 1908, 1910, and 1932. The collection is composed of newspaper clippings; correspondence; accounts (1910-1939); an arithmetic notebook belonging to Mary Gardner Patterson; campaign mementos; envelopes; invitations; land records (1924-1939); leaflet entitled "Patterson vs. Carmack: Appeal to Reason"; legal brief for *Williams v. Tennessee*; legal documents (1933-1937); a magazine, probably from India; memorandums; articles and clippings about the night riders of Reelfoot Lake (Obion County) Tennessee; obituaries for Malcolm R. Patterson and his third wife, Mary Russell (Gardner) Patterson; pamphlets; platform of the Tennessee Democratic Party for 1908; photographs; poetry; political cartoons; proclamations (1901-1910); religious materials; scrapbooks; speeches; and temperance materials.

There are more newspaper clippings than any other one type of item in this collection. In order to facilitate research, the clippings have been separated and arranged according to subject. For each of the four gubernatorial races in which Patterson participated there is one folder of clippings. Those for the campaign of 1906 are primarily about Patterson's successful fight against the incumbent, John I. Cox, for the Democratic nomination. The colorful gubernatorial contest of 1908, when Edward Ward Carmack challenged Governor Patterson for the leadership of Tennessee's Democrats, inspired a great deal of newspaper coverage. A series of joint debates was held throughout Tennessee by the two Democratic aspirants, both of whom were considered among the best orators of their day. In his speeches, Carmack advocated state-wide prohibition, while Patterson favored local option. Many of the clippings for 1908 emphasize their debates on prohibition, the major issue then dividing the Democratic Party and the states.

In 1910, the central issue of the campaign was that of a "free and independent judiciary." As a result of Patterson's pardoning of Duncan Brown Cooper in the Carmack murder trial, his opponents accused the governor of undue meddling into the affairs of the courts. Although he received his party's nomination for a third term at the so-called "June bug convention," Patterson was forced by those who bolted the Democratic Party to step aside in favor of Robert Love Taylor for the sake of party harmony. In 1932, Patterson made one last attempt for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination, but was eliminated in a three-way race with Hill McAlister and Lewis S. Pope. McAlister was the candidate of Memphis boss, Edward H. Crump, whose organization Patterson charged with illegal registration of Negro voters in Shelby County. Such political battles as those of 1910 and 1932 are chronicled by the newspaper clippings in this collection.

Other clippings give account of many of the issues and events during Patterson's two terms as governor, including his veto of the Prohibition Law of 1909, his speeches, his use of the pardoning power, his inauguration in 1907 and 1909, and social affairs held in the Governor's Mansion. One folder contains clippings about the sensational trial at

which Duncan and Robin Cooper, friends of Governor Patterson, were found guilty of murdering Edward Ward Carmack. Included are the March 20, 1909, issue of the *Nashville Banner* with headlines of the verdict, a picture of Duncan Cooper on the witness stand, and a picture of Patterson on the witness stand. Two boxes contain a series of articles written by Patterson for the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*. Entitled "Day by Day with Governor Patterson," the columns ran from 1921 to 1933 and covered a variety of topics in addition to politics. The rest of the clippings are about such subjects as Patterson's conversion and his temperance lectures, the Patterson family, the activities of Confederate veterans, the Confederate memorial on Stone Mountain, Georgia, Austin Peay, railroads, and Florida.

These Patterson papers contain forty-six letters written by Malcolm R. Patterson between 1907 and 1935. Most of them are addressed to his third wife, Mary Russell (Gardner) Patterson, and are filled with expressions of his love for and devotion to her. In addition, Patterson included some comment on his political career and motivations. On April 4, 1907, he rejoiced that "My enemies are at last recognizing that they cannot thwart the measure I have advocated, and this is giving me great satisfaction, for aside from the honor, I sincerely want to do something which will benefit the State...." His letters indicate that Patterson realized the tempest Carmack's challenge would provoke. On August 25, 1907, he warned his fiancée, "Well, Mary, we are going to run into a storm. Carmack is to be a candidate." Although he regretted the coming contest for her sake, he felt he should make the race. "Willingly I would not run, if it could be avoided," he wrote, "but his [Carmack's] candidacy will make it imperative on me to become a candidate." In later letters Patterson told about his travels while lecturing for the Anti-Saloon League and on the Chautauqua circuit. He reported on January 6, 1918, that he had been averaging over \$1,000 per meeting.

Considering the frequent criticism of Governor Patterson by churchmen, his correspondence with two of Tennessee's religious leaders is most illuminating. Soon after Patterson's defeat of Carmack in 1908, Thomas S. Byrne, Catholic Bishop of Nashville, congratulated him on "...your splendid campaign against misrepresentation, fanaticism, and hypocrisy and on your magnificent victory." And on November 10, 1908, the night after Carmack's death, Thomas Frank Gailor, Episcopal Bishop of Tennessee, encouraged the governor to "Do the right, as God gives you the wisdom to see the right, and he will not forsake you. You will have to endure the criticism & assaults of madmen and fanatics, but you have the prayers & good wishes of thousands of honest men & women ...."

A letter of special interest in the collection was written by Truman H. Alexander to Malcolm Patterson on August 24, 1925. According to Alexander, William Jennings Bryan had written Governor Austin Peay on June 27 to request that Patterson join the prosecution in the Scopes trial. Peay had responded that Patterson could not participate in the case since he was at the time a judge. Another letter of note was written by Governor Peay to Patterson on May 18, 1923. In it, Peay offered to appoint the former

governor to a judgeship if he wanted one. The governor assured Patterson that he was making the appointment out of friendship, and that he was willing to bear the criticism which would result.

About 1930, H. A. McGusty wrote to Patterson about the cotton trade and economic conditions in Mississippi at the beginning of the Great Depression. McGusty believed that the low price of cotton was not caused by over supply but rather by the unreasonable demands of English labor unions which caused the mills in Manchester to close down. Much of the rest of the correspondence is composed of letters and telegrams of condolence sent to Mrs. Patterson when her husband died in 1935. Among those who offered their sympathy were Dr. and Mrs. Lucius E. Burch, Joseph W. Byrne, and Rogers Caldwell. A complete listing of the correspondents in the Patterson manuscripts can be found elsewhere in this register.

The two scrapbooks in this collection contain newspaper clippings and other items relating to Patterson's political career. One covers the period when Patterson was attorney general of Shelby County and a representative in the United State Congress, ca. 1894-1906. The other focuses on his first bid for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination in 1905 / 1906. The folder of political cartoons adds further sources for a study of Patterson's role in Tennessee politics. Most of the cartoons were drawn and published during the campaigns of 1906, 1908, 1910, and 1932.

Patterson's talent and demand as a speaker are indicated by the seven folders of his speeches which are in the collection. There are four folders of speeches in his own handwriting, one of printed speeches (1905-1932), and two of typed speeches. In addition, there are typed extracts from speeches made by Carmack during the campaign of 1908 and a printed speech made by Robert Love Taylor in 1906 when he was running for a seat in the United States Senate. Several pamphlets concern political exchanges between Carmack and Taylor in 1905. At that time, Carmack was a senator from Tennessee, and Taylor was preparing to run for his seat in 1906. The temperance materials are made up of magazine articles and newspaper clippings which were apparently including the March, 1914, issue of *The American Patriot*.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

### Malcolm Rice Patterson

- 1861 June 7 – Born in Somerville (Morgan County) Alabama, the son of Josiah (1837–1904) and Josephine Rice Patterson. Christened Hamilton Rice Patterson
- 1866 Josiah Patterson changed his son’s name to Malcolm Rice Patterson. The latter, however, retained the nickname “Ham” throughout his life.
- 1872 Moved with his family to Memphis, Tennessee, which he later made his permanent home
- Graduated from the Christian Brothers’ College in Memphis, Tennessee
- Took a special literary course at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee; then studied law
- 1883 Admitted to bar.
- ca. 1883 – 1886 Married Sarah Lucille Johnson, who bore him three children
- 1894 Elected district attorney of Shelby County, Tennessee
- 1900 September 10 – Resigned as district attorney in order to run for a seat in the United States Congress
- 1901 March 4 – Entered Congress as a Democratic Representative; served in the Fifty-seventh, Fifty-eighth, and Fifty-ninth Congresses
- 1903 Married Sybil Isabelle Hodges on November 4 at her home in Carthage, Missouri; one child was born of this marriage.
- 1906 August 6 – Second wife died
- 1906 November 5 – Resigned from Congress following his election as Governor of Tennessee; defeated the Republican candidate, H. Clay Evans of Chattanooga
- 1907 January 17 – Inaugurated for first term as Governor

- 1907 December 7 – Married Mary Russell Gardner of Union City, Tennessee; they had two children.
- 1908 Challenged by Edward Ward Carmack for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination. Their campaign centered on the prohibition issue, with Carmack in favor of statewide prohibition and Patterson in favor of local option. Patterson won the Democratic nomination after a series of debates with Carmack which were held throughout Tennessee.
- 1908 October – Night riders at Reelfoot Lake seized Quentin Rankin and Robert Z. Taylor and murdered Rankin. Governor Patterson personally commanded the state militia which he ordered to the lake area to restore order and apprehend the murderers.
- 1908 November – Patterson elected for a second term as Governor; defeated his Republican opponent, George N. Tillman
- 1908 November 9 – Edward Ward Carmack shot to death on a Nashville street; Patterson’s friend Duncan Brown Cooper and the latter’s son, Robin were charged with, and later found guilty of Carmack’s murder.
- 1909 Governor Patterson vetoed the prohibition law passed by the Tennessee legislature. The law was then passed over his veto.
- 1909 Passage of General Education Bill, one of the most significant acts of Patterson’s second term
- 1910 April 13, Tennessee Supreme Court affirmed Duncan Cooper’s conviction in the murder of Carmack. Approximately one hour later, Governor Patterson pardoned Cooper. This action caused massive criticism of the Governor.
- 1910 June 16 – Patterson obtained the Democratic gubernatorial nomination at the so-called “June Bug” convention. In the campaign which followed, the major issue, in addition to prohibition and the pardon of Cooper, came to be the nomination of State Supreme Court justices.
- 1910 August – “Independent judiciary” convention held by Patterson’s opponents; their slate of Supreme Court justices defeated the one backed by Patterson which had been nominated at the same time he was.

- 1910                    September – Patterson surrendered gubernatorial nomination to Robert Love Taylor for the sake of harmony in the Democratic Party.
- 1910                    November – Taylor defeated by the Republican candidate for governor, Ben W. Hooper.
- 1911                    Patterson left the governorship and retired to Memphis to practice law.
- 1913                    Patterson converted to the temperance cause and began making extensive lecture tours under the auspices of the Anti-Saloon League.
- 1915                    Made an unsuccessful bid for a seat in the United States Senate; defeated by Kenneth D. McKellar in the Democratic run-off after Luke Lea had been eliminated in the three-man race
- 1920                    Began writing a column for the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*; the columns continued through 1933.
- 1923                    Appointed and subsequently elected judge of the First Circuit Court of Shelby County, Tennessee
- 1932                    Unsuccessful candidate for Democratic gubernatorial nomination; defeated by Hill McAlister in a three-way race which also included Lewis S. Pope
- 1934                    September 1 – retired as judge of Shelby County circuit court
- 1935                    March 8 – died while on a visit to Sarasota, Florida; buried in Forest Hill Cemetery in Memphis, Tennessee



## CONTAINER LIST

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5. Correspondence – E - H
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7. Correspondence – Patterson, Malcolm Rice – n.d.; 1907-1909
8. Correspondence – Patterson, Malcolm Rice – 1914-1919
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10. Correspondence – Patterson, Malcolm Rice, Jr. - Robinson
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1. Land records – 1924-1939
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3. Legal brief – William vs. Tennessee
4. Legal documents – 1933-1937
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6. Memorandums
7. Miscellaneous
- \*8. Newspaper clippings – re: Austin Peay
- \*9. Newspaper clippings – re: Campaign of 1906
- \*10. Newspaper clippings – re: Campaign of 1908
- \*11. Newspaper clippings – re: Campaign of 1910
- \*12. Newspaper clippings – re: Campaign of 1932
- \*13. Newspaper clippings – re: Activities of Confederate veterans
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2. Date unknown
3. Date unknown
4. Date unknown
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6. 1923
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**Newspaper Clippings  
“Day by Day with Governor Patterson”**

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2. 1925
3. 1926
4. 1926
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**Newspaper Clippings  
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1. Newspaper clippings – Editorials – re: Malcolm Rice Patterson
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4. Newspaper clippings – re: Pardons by Governor Patterson
- \*5. Newspaper clippings – re: Patterson, Malcolm R.
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7. Newspaper clippings – Pictures of Patterson
- \*8. Newspaper clippings – re: Prohibition Law, 1909
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10. Newspaper clippings – re: Social affairs
- \*11. Newspaper clippings – re: Speeches of Governor Patterson
- \*12. Newspaper clippings – re: Stone Mountain, Georgia
- \*13. Newspaper clippings – re: Temperance lectures
- \*14. Newspaper clippings – Miscellaneous
- \*15. Night riders of Reelfoot Lake (Obion County) Tennessee
- \*16. Obituaries – Patterson, Malcolm R., and Mary Russell (Gardner) Patterson
17. Pamphlets – re: Political exchanges between E. W. Carmack and R. L. Taylor
18. Platform of Tennessee Democratic Party

19. Photographs – Family (see Box 8)
20. Photographs – Miscellaneous (see Box 8)
21. Poetry
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1. Scrapbook – re: Politics, ca. 1894-1906
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6. Speeches (handwritten) – Patterson, Malcolm R.
7. Speeches (printed) – Patterson, Malcolm R. – n. d.; 1904 - 1932
8. Speeches (typed) – Patterson, Malcolm R.
9. Speeches (typed) – Patterson, Malcolm R.
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1. Scrapbook – re: Politics, 1905-1906
2. Photographs, Family (folder 19 from Box 6)
3. Photographs, Miscellaneous (folder 20 from Box 6)

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Oversize clippings from folders above marked with \*

### **Oversize Folder 2**

Oversize clippings from folders above marked with \*

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- Alexander, R. L., Sr. to Mary (Gardner) Patterson, 1935 (telegram), re: death of Malcolm Patterson, 1-4
- Alexander, Truman H. to Malcolm R. Paterson, 1925, re: W. J. Bryan's desire to have Patterson associated with the prosecution in the Scopes trial, 1-4
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- Byrns, Joseph Wellington to Mary (Gardner) Patterson, 1935 (telegram), re: condolences on death of M. R. Patterson, 1-4
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