



Bio & Character Sketch of Senator Frank Harris

April 25, 1871 - December 30, 1944

Age in April, 1923: 52 Age at Death: 72
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Age when picture was taken: 50

Barkwell Defense Lawyer
Senator Frank Harris

Frank Gaines Harris (April 25, 1871 – December 30, 1944) was an American [Democratic](#) politician from the state of [Missouri](#). He was the state's 33rd [Lieutenant Governor](#) and held that office longer than anyone else until [Peter Kinder](#) surpassed that record, serving three terms from 2005 until 2017.^[1]

Personal history

Frank G. Harris was born in [Boone County, Missouri](#) to parents Robert and Mary E. (Proctor) Harris.^[2] He received his higher education at the Kirksville Normal School (now [Truman State University](#)) and graduated from the [University of Missouri](#) with an L.L.B. in Law in 1898. Harris established a law practice in [Columbia, Missouri](#) after passing the Bar. He and his wife, Grace (Sims) Harris, were the parents of two daughters and a son.

Political history

Frank G. Harris served as Boone County Prosecuting Attorney for six years before being elected to the [Missouri General Assembly](#). He first served in the House of Representatives then as State Senator from the 10th district between 1915 and 1932. In 1932 he won the first of three consecutive terms as Lieutenant Governor and did not choose to run for a fourth. Harris died of heart failure shortly before the end of his third term.

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Character Sketch

Again, as in the case of Congressman Sam Major, George Barkwell sought to field a “Dream Team” Of lawyers to defend him.

Frank Harris was a well known and very cunning lawyer who previously held the position of Boone County Prosecutor. He was a sitting member of the Missouri State Legislature at the time of George Barkwell’s trial. It was likely Harris who pushed the button on the defense’s strategy of trying James Scott instead of George Barkwell and Barkwell’s trial. This is evidenced by his opening statement at the trial as well as his posturing with Judge Gantt, whom he would later vote to confirm for the Missouri Supreme Court.

Harris’ questioning of the three alibi witnesses who testified in Barkwell’s defense was clean and simple. Those witnesses likely lied through their teeth in order to place Barkwell “anywhere BUT near the side of the bridge where Scott was lynched.”



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HARRIS (rising, walking forward)

George Barkwell is a man known in Boone County for his spotless reputation in business and for his recent term of service on the City Council. Square dealing, that's what George Barkwell is known for. Square dealing is all he expects of you. Now, I believe that in this case the evidence will show that the deceased man was a negro. Soon before the alleged lynching, he was accused of the heinous crime of rape.

I think the evidence will show that the brutal offense was committed on a 14 year-old white girl. Miss Regina Almstedt encountered a negro man on Stewart Bridge on the afternoon of April 22. That negro lured her into the ravine below, removed his belt and wrapped it around her neck. He choked this innocent girl.

He wrapped his belt around her neck and threatened to kill her. He drew a knife and cut away her underpants. Then, gentlemen, he accomplished his purpose.

The courtroom holds its breath. Jurors and spectators lean forward. Vaughn and Caston exchange glances—plainly appalled.

HARRIS

Two colored men were brought to the girl's home the next day. She said neither was guilty. Then the third was brought, and the girl went into hysterics... She went into hysterics and said he was the man. That third man was James Scott. There were other identifications. Two lineups. The victim identified Scott by the smell of chemicals on his clothing. By the sound of his voice. The Chief of Police supervised these identifications.

A statement that her identification was certain and unmistakable went to the press. The Columbia Tribune declared Scott guilty. By Saturday night, feeling ran high. The crowd grew to at least 1500 at the jail when Scott was brought out.

Ruby Hulen—the Prosecutor himself—stepped out of that jail and asked the crowd a question.

Harris lifts his notepad, running his finger under the words as he reads slowly.

HARRIS

"Is there one person here who does not think this man should be hanged?"

Hulen jumps to his feet.

HULEN

I didn't say that!

HARRIS

I apologize. There seems to be some confusion. Two eyewitnesses said...

He glances at the pad again, quizzically, and slowly returns it to the table.

HARRIS

I withdraw my statement. My apologies. Where was I? Yes, the evidence. The evidence will show that George Barkwell did nothing more at the jail than any other spectator. Testimony will show he didn't touch James Scott at Stewart Bridge. I hardly know why the prosecutor has pursued Mr. Barkwell. It's as if he's decided the whole town is guilty and some prominent citizen must pay the price.