

**FRANCES PARKINSON KEYES  
CORRESPONDENCE, 1927-1938  
VC22638**

QUANTITY: 1 box (23 items)  
ACCESS: Open to research. Please consult librarian for retrieval from the vault.  
ACQUISITION: Purchased from E. Wharton & Co., Oakton, Virginia, July 2001

**Biographical Note:**

From *American Women Writers*, Vol. 2, pp. 450-452, and Frances Parkinson Keyes's memoir, *All Flags Flying*, pp. 528-529. [Supplied and edited by the vendor.]

Frances Parkinson Keyes (1885-1970), magazine writer and editor, political wife and best-selling author, was born in Charlottesville, Virginia and raised in New Hampshire. She married Henry Wilder Keyes, Republican Governor of New Hampshire and subsequently Senator for New Hampshire until his death in June 1938. Though she published her first novel in 1919, her writing career remained secondary to her role as a mother and political wife. For some fourteen years she wrote a monthly column for *Good Housekeeping* called "Letters from a Senator's Wife" and from 1923 to 1936 was a contributing editor. When the Depression arrived and the Keyes, like so many others, suffered financial setbacks, Frances could offset these deficits with her professional earnings. In 1937 she became editor of the *National Historical Magazine*. Her tenure proved brief, however; soon after the death of Senator Keyes, she resigned her position and left Washington. Mrs. Keyes, like Mrs. Roosevelt, left the organization after the D.A.R.'s Constitution Hall was refused to Marion Anderson for a concert. Mrs. Keyes's career as a writer, however, took hold. She produced a number of readable novels which followed *Honor Bright* onto the bestseller list: *All That Glitters* (1941); *Crescent Carnival* (1942); *Dinner At Antoine's* (1948); and *Joy Street* (1950) to name just a few. Between 1919 and her death in 1970 she penned over 50 titles: novels, memoirs, short story collections, travelogues, etc., an achievement all the more remarkable for the limited education she had received (only seven years of formal schooling) and for a back injury which severely limited her mobility.

Frances Parkinson Keyes agreed to undertake the editorship of the [*National Historical Magazine*] published by the Daughters of the American Revolution. Her son relates in an afterward to his mother's memoir that she renamed the magazine and "transformed it into an embryonic *American Heritage*." The magazine hitherto had confined itself to flattering portraits and articles on D.A.R. members. Mrs. Keyes's approach represented a distinct change in editorial policy. She thought historic homes and preservation, for instance, should be an important item on the D.A.R. agenda and wanted to use the magazine to promote the issue. [Her interest in restoration was genuine. Later she purchased the General Beauregard house in the Old French Quarter of New Orleans and restored it over a period of some years. The house, now known as the Beauregard-Keyes House, is now open to the public.

**Scope and Contents Note:**

The collection is comprised mostly of letters between Frances Parkinson Keyes and Eleanor Roosevelt. The letters generally concern political issues of the time and business related to the Daughters of American Revolution. It also includes a letter of Emily Newell Blair regarding arrangements for Mrs. Keyes to meet with the wife of Governor Alfred Smith of New York.

The vendor of these papers arranged the documents and provided the descriptive information as follows:

The archive traces the cordial professional relationship between Frances Parkinson Keyes and Eleanor Roosevelt from 1927 to 1938. A cluster of early correspondence concerns Mrs. Keyes's desire to write a magazine article featuring the wife of Governor Al Smith; later correspondence, after Mrs. Roosevelt becomes First Lady and Mrs. Keyes editor of the D.A.R. magazine, reflect the letter's desire to involve Mrs. Roosevelt in D.A.R. activities. Included are 23 items: a letter from Emily Blair Newell to Mrs. Keyes; two telegrams from Mrs. Roosevelt to Mrs. Keyes, and a telegram from Mrs. Keyes to Mrs. Roosevelt in reply; five typed letters signed (one a secretarial signature) from Mrs. Roosevelt to Mrs. Keyes; eight file copies of letters from Mrs. Keyes to Mrs. Roosevelt and five letters from Malvina Thompson Scheider, as secretary to Mrs. Roosevelt, to Mrs. Keyes.

Both women were political wives – Mrs. Keyes was the wife of New Hampshire Republican Senator Henry Wilder Keyes – albeit on the opposite side of party lines, a situation which provokes humor and tension in the correspondence. Even with regular contact over a decade, the relationship remains professional: the women are too different to become friends; but, they respect one another and there is genuine warmth in their exchanges.

The first letter listed is the sole contribution to the archive by Emily Newell Blair whose activities as a suffragist, member of the Democratic National Committee and the Consumers' Advisory Board brought her to the fore within the Democratic Party during the first years after women received suffrage.

The correspondence between Mrs. Keyes and Mrs. Roosevelt breaks off shortly before the death of Senator Keyes.

It should be pointed out that the varying stationery Mrs. Roosevelt uses mirrors her movements throughout the decade (with the exception of the Governor's mansion in Albany). Also worth noting is that the White House stationery with Mrs. Roosevelt's letters is engraved in gold; that with Ms. Scheider's acknowledgements to Mrs. Keyes is engraved in blue ink only.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Contents</b>
1	Blair, Emily Newell. Typed letter signed. Joplin, Missouri: To Mrs. Keyes, November 22, 1927. Signed in full, "Emily Newell Blair". Two sheets, 8½" x

**Item Contents**

- 11", the first Mrs. Blair's engraved stationery. Rumpling along top and right margins. Very good.
- Mrs. Keyes has written at top left hand corner, "ans. by hand/(Hotel \_\_\_\_ Boston\_\_\_\_/ Nov. 28". Mrs. Blair writes regarding arrangements for Mrs. Keyes to meet with the governor's wife: "I am writing to Mrs. Smith and to the Governor's publicity manager, Mrs. Henry Moskowitz, urging upon both of them the importance of your meeting Mrs. Smith ... I think it will be better for you to write to Mrs. Smith, outlining your plan and asking for a conference. The position of the Governor at this time is that he is not a candidate and is in no way seeking publicity that will put him in that light. For this reason he would not wish to invite anyone to meet Mrs. Smith with an article in mind. When you make the approach, however, it does not contradict his position to acquiesce. You see the point ..."
- 2 [Keyes, Frances Parkinson]. Typed letter (carbon copy). [Washington, D.C.]: To Mrs. [Alfred] Smith; December 2, 1927. Single sheet, tissue typing paper (printed "COPY"). Age-toning. Very good.
- Mrs. Keyes encloses a letter of introduction from Emily Newell Blair and explains that she has written an article entitled "Who Do You Choose for President" and another in which Keyes described "the hostesses of those candidates with whom I was personally acquainted, and both the editor of the Delineator and I are anxious to follow this by another on the ladies who up to this time I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting ..."
- 3 Roosevelt, Eleanor. Western Union Telegram. 15 East 40 Street, New York City: To Mrs. Keyes; December 5, 1927. Western Union Telegram form, 8" x 6 7/8"; "An Answer Is Expected" sticker at upper left hand. Markings in purple pencil re: problems with delivery; upper right corner lacking (not affecting text). About very good.
- Mrs. Roosevelt asks if Mrs. Keyes could "lunch with me to meet Mrs. Alfred E. Smith" and wants her to wire "what dates you could be here either now or after Christmas".
- 4 Keyes, Frances Parkinson. Western Union Telegram. [Washington, D.C.]; to Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt; December 6, 1927. Western Union Telegram form (typed), 8 1/4" x 6 7/8". Age-toning; chips to right edge. Very good.
- Mrs. Keyes says she can lunch that Saturday, provides alternate dates and gives Mrs. Roosevelt her Washington address.
- 5 Roosevelt, Eleanor. Western Union Telegram. New York: To Mrs. Frances Parkinson Keyes, December 7, 1927.
- "Mrs. Smith cannot make appointment either this week or next. Will let me know later about week of January eighth when I will advise you. Eleanor Roosevelt".

**Item Contents**

- 6 [Keyes, Frances Parkinson]. Typed letter, file copy. [Washington, D.C.: to Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, December 8, 1927]. Single sheet, 8½" x 11", tissue typing paper printed "Copy". Age-toning. Very good.

Mrs. Keyes writes of the delayed delivery of Mrs. Roosevelt's first telegram to her: "I am sorry for the delay in acknowledging the first one but it was sent to me without initials at the Women's National Democratic Club where upon inquiry the Western Union was told I was unknown, and there does seem to be a touch of humor about addressing a Republican Senator's wife there!"

- 7 She has enclosed a copy of her letter to Mrs. Smith "so that you will see exactly what my plan or rather my hope, concerning her has been ... I should very much like also to see her at the Executive Mansion in Albany since unless I do I cannot carry out my plan of presenting her in an article with Mrs. Donahey and Mrs. Ritchie, using the setting of the Executive Mansion in each case..." Roosevelt, Eleanor. Typed letter (with secretarial signature). 15 East 40<sup>th</sup> Street, New York City; To Mrs. Frances Parkinson Keyes; December 9, 1927. Two sheets, 8½" x 11"; on the blue letterhead of the Democratic State Committee/Women's Activities. Folded to fit an envelope; slight browning along right edge. Very good.

- 8 Mrs. Roosevelt writes regarding the possibilities for Mrs. Keyes to meet Mrs. Smith at the Governor's Mansion: "This will, I feel sure, fit in with you[r] plans much better than meeting her in my home in New York". As to the misdirected telegram, she says: "It was very stupid of me to send your telegram to the Woman's National Democratic Club. I can only offer as an excuse that I am sending so many things there, it was the only address before my mind". [Keyes, Frances Parkinson]. Typed letter, file copy. Washington, D.C.: To Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt; May 22, 1928. Single sheet, 8½" x 11", tissue typing paper. Lacking lower left tip; carbon residue along right margin. About very good. Marked "Personal".

Mrs. Keyes writes: "Your letter of May 17 has just reached me and has surprised and grieved me beyond measure. [Paragraph] I hasten to state that I never have said to anyone that I should use an account of my visit to Albany as anti-Smith propaganda during the campaign. I am sorry that you should need assurance on this point, for I do not think I have ever been accused of writing an unkind word about anybody or of writing anything from a party bias ... Magazines are not printed for Republicans or Democrats, but for Americans, to whom current events must be presented with absolute impartiality, or they could not be presented at all."

She tells Mrs. Roosevelt that she will be in New York the following week and would be happy to meet "to talk over ... a situation which you seem to have completely misunderstood, or in regard to which you have been strangely

**Item Contents**

- misinformed”.
- 9 Roosevelt, Eleanor. Typed letter signed. Hotel Biltmore, New York City: To Mrs. Frances Parkinson Keyes; May 25, 1928. Single sheet, 8½" x 11"; on the brown letterhead of the New York State Democratic Committee/Democratic Publicity Committee. Folded to fit an envelope; a little rumpling. Very good.
- Mrs. Roosevelt soothes Mrs. Keyes and tells her, “I felt sure that you could not have made the statements attributed to you” and invites her to dine with them. “I should be delighted if you can do this and if you would like to go to a play, let me know what you would like to see”.
- Mrs. Keyes recounts the writing of this article for the *Delineator* in her unfinished memoir *All Flags Flying* published after her death. She lays out her dislike of Governor Smith, the difficult and grudging interview he accorded her and her impatience with “the unsatisfactory arrangements that had been made for it”. The correspondence suggests that on some minor points Mrs. Keyes’s memory failed her, or that she chose simply to give it a different spin. She relates that Mrs. Moskowitz insisted on seeing the article prior to its submission, a request which Mrs. Keyes and her publisher refused. “Next to my great surprise I received a letter from Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt whom I had not seen since 1920, asking me to dine and go to the theater with her the next time I was in New York. As she was also working actively for Smith, I could not help feeling, much as I liked her, that there was an ulterior purpose in this sudden show of hospitality...” Though the two may not have *seen* each other since 1920, they had been in contact – contrary to what the memoir implies. The memoir also fails to note that Mrs. Keyes asked to meet with Mrs. Roosevelt and her invitation was in response to that request.
- 10 Roosevelt, Eleanor. Typed letter signed. Val-Kill Cottage, Hyde Park, New York. To Mrs. [Frances Parkinson] Keyes, ND, ca. 1935-1936. Single sheet, 6" x 7"; on Mrs. Roosevelt’s engraved stationery (Val-Kill Cottage/Hyde Park, Dutchess County/New York/Telephone: Hyde Park 87). Folded to fit an envelope; age-toned.
- Mrs. Keyes additionally has used the lower margin for a series of notes, perhaps matters she wishes to discuss with Mrs. Roosevelt: “position – independent/of Hearst –/‘peace department’/politics – Rowe \_\_\_/ Satur am – Nelles/‘matters of conscience’ –/Season Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>/ dedication of book –/markers for/bridge/letters of introduction/Puerto Rico – Health/South –/Arletts Ahrens – Extra \_\_\_/Birthday Party/State dinner – “. Mrs. Roosevelt asks Mrs. Keyes to join her for lunch.
- 11 Roosevelt, Eleanor. Typed letter signed. Hyde Park, N.Y.: To Mrs. [Frances Parkinson] Keyes; July 13, 1936. Single sheet, 6 1/8" x 9¼", on engraved White House stationery. Folded twice to fit an envelope; age-toning evident. About very good.

Mrs. Roosevelt writes: “I am trying to spend a good part of [my summer] in

**Item Contents**

- Hyde Park in order to be within reach of [election] headquarters. [Paragraph] We can not any of us tell what will happen in November but in any case it looks as though things in this country were in better condition that they were in '32" and closes: "My love to you, Affectionately, Eleanor Roosevelt".
- 12 Keyes, Frances Parkinson. Typed letter, file copy. [Washington, D.C.]: To Mrs. Roosevelt, October 13, 1937. Single sheet, 8½" x 11", yellow tissue typing paper. Nicking to edges; age-toning. Very good.

- Mrs. Keyes, as the editor of the D.A.R. magazine, asks if Mrs. Roosevelt could write an article regarding her interest in "marking all sites" and explains that it will enhance a piece by Mrs. Woodward "telling what the Works Progress Administration is doing in this respect ..." She hopes the President and First Lady will come to see the new red curtains at Constitution Hall "and let me come to see yours. I want to tell you also something of my experiences in Europe this summer, especially those in Germany".
- 13 Roosevelt, Eleanor. Typed letter signed. The White House, Washington [D.C.]; to Mrs. Keyes, October 20, 1937. Single sheet, 6 1/8" x 9¼", on engraved White House stationery. Folded twice to fit an envelope; small spot on lower right edge. Eleanor Roosevelt's signature is circled in pencil with the notation, "same size"; another notation, "Return for files -". (Presumably Mrs. Roosevelt's signature was reproduced in connection with an article.) About very good.

- Mrs. Roosevelt writes, with a hint of exasperation, "I do not see how I could possibly write an article for you [right, x'd out] now. I find from my calendar that every minute of my time is filled" though she "would like to see you and will surely do so when I get back in December".
- 14 Keyes, Frances Parkinson. Typed letter, file copy. [Washington, D.C.]: To Mrs. Roosevelt; December 6, 1937. Single sheet, 8½" x 11", yellow tissue typing paper. Chipping along right edge. About very good.

- Mrs. Keyes sends the new issues of the D.A.R. magazine (presumably): "I hope you will feel that some progress has already been made. [Paragraph] I also hope that you will let me come to see you some day soon when I may have a half hours talk with you".
- 15 Keyes, Frances Parkinson. Typed letter, file copy. (Washington, D.C.): To Mrs. Roosevelt; February 4, 1938. Single sheet, 8½" x 11", yellow tissue typing paper. Age-toning along right edge. Very good.

Mrs. Keyes forwards a letter from "a great-great grandniece of George Washington" [Miss Lewis]: "indeed, it was her ancestral [sic] home 'Marmion' that I used as the prototype for Solomons Garden in 'Honor Bright' ..." [*Honor Bright*, published in 1936, was Mrs. Keyes first bestselling novel.] Can Mrs. Roosevelt find employment for her? She continues: "I did not foresee when I went to Europe last summer that I would have the opportunity to return under rather extraordinary circumstances. Neither did I foresee, when I agreed to make

- | <b>Item</b> | <b>Contents</b>   |
|-------------|---|
|             | speaking trips through the Middle West and the South that the Presidential family and the policies of the New Deal would be the main subjects which I would be called upon to discuss ...I am very eager to steer my difficult course with wisdom ...” Would it be possible for Mrs. Roosevelt to “create an hour next week when I could come and talk with you ...”  |
| 16          | Scheider, Malvina Thompson (as secretary to Mrs. Roosevelt). Typed letter signed. The White House, Washington [D.C.]: to Mrs. Keyes; February 8, 1938. Single sheet, 6 3/8" x 9 3/16", on engraved White House stationery. Folded twice to fit an envelope. Very good.  |
| 17          | Ms. Scheider writes Mrs. Roosevelt can see Mrs. Keyes on the 10 <sup>th</sup> .<br>Scheider, M[alvina] T[hompson] (as secretary to Mrs. Roosevelt). Typed letter signed. The White House, Washington [D.C.]: to Mrs. Keyes, February 14, 1938. Single sheet, 6 1/4" x 9 3/16", on engraved White House stationery. Folded twice to fit and envelope. Very good.   |
| 18          | Ms. Scheider conveys “the statement Mrs. Roosevelt promised to send you”.<br>Keyes, Frances Parkinson. Typed letter, file copy. [Washington, D.C.]: to Mrs. Roosevelt; February 24, 1938. Single sheet, 8 1/2" x 11", yellow tissue paper. Age-toning. Very good. Marked in pencil at upper right corner, “Personal”.   |
| 19          | Mrs. Keyes acknowledges the statement by Mrs. Roosevelt: “I am using it in the form of an illustrated editorial, and I am also making extended mention of it in my department, ‘Contributors, Collaborators, and Critics’ and using your name on the cover”.<br>Scheider, Malvina T[hompson] (as secretary to Mrs. Roosevelt). Typed letter signed. The White House, Washington [D.C.]: to National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution; March 1, 1938. Single sheet, 6 1/4" x 9 1/4", on engraved White House stationery. At upper right, in red ink: “for/Mrs. Keyes/3/2/38” and at upper left in pencil: “Personal”. |
| 20          | Ms. Scheider acknowledges a check sent to Mrs. Roosevelt with thanks.<br>Keyes, Frances Parkinson. Typed Letter, file copy. [Washington, D.C.]: to Mrs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt; March 3, 1938. Single sheet, 8 1/2" x 11, yellow tissue typing paper. Very good.   |
| 21          | Mrs. Keyes passes on a comment she has received regarding the portrait of the First Lady published in the February issue of the D.A.R. magazine.<br>Scheider, Malvina T[hompson] (as secretary to Mrs. Roosevelt). Typed letter signed. The White House, Washington [D.C.]: to Mrs. Frances Parkinson Keyes; March 7, 1938. Single sheet, 6 1/4" x 9 1/4"; on engraved White House stationery. Folded to fit an envelope. Very good. At upper right, in pencil, “file” and, in another hand (likely Mrs. Keyes’), “Cocktails requested”.  |
|             | Mrs. Roosevelt’s secretary acknowledges receipt of magazines sent by Mrs.   |

- | Item | Contents   |
|------|--|
| 22   | <p>Keyes.</p> <p>Keyes, Frances Parkinson. Typed letter, file copy. [Washington, D.C.]: to Mrs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt; April 13, 1938. Single sheet, 8½" x 11", yellow tissue typing paper. Minor edgewear along bottom. Very good. At upper right, in pencil, "Cocktails req.____".</p> <p>Mrs. Keyes asks whether it would be possible for a Democratic National Committeewoman from Natchez to present a slide lecture to delegates attending the D.A.R. "Continental Congress" on "The Old South" at the White House. "I think it would be a very fine thing if the delegates could hear this lecture and see these pictures for it might stimulate interest in the type of restoration which I outlined in my recent report to you ..."</p> |
| 23   | <p>Scheider, Malvina Thompson. Typed letter signed. The White House, Washington [D.C.]; to Mrs. Frances Parkinson Keyes; April 14, 1938. Single sheet, 6¼" x 9¼", on engraved White House stationery. Folded to fit an envelope. Very good. At upper right corner, in pencil "Con. Req."</p> <p>Ms. Scheider advises Mrs. Keyes on behalf of Mrs. Roosevelt "that she does not know Mrs. Miller" and "[i]n any case, she is afraid she cannot be of any help to you, as there is no space in the White House suitable for an entertainment of this kind".</p>  |

VC22638.doc