

#11 - President Wilson Addresses Congress

The Edwards County Historical Society was recently given some scrapbooks which had belonged to Marion Edwards Shouse (1885-1972). Marion was the daughter of a prominent businessman, R. E. Edwards and the niece of W. C. Edwards for whom Edwards County is named.

In 1911, Jouett Shouse (1879-1968) moved to Kinsley, Kansas where he met and married Marion in 1913 in a very lavish wedding. He became involved in agricultural and livestock businesses and served on the Board of Directors of the Kinsley Bank. He was a Progressive-era Democrat and was elected a state senator in 1913. In 1914 he was elected to the United States Congress where he served until 1919 when President Woodrow Wilson appointed him as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury.



The above photograph was found in Marion's scrapbook. It was taken on April 2, 1917 as President Woodrow Wilson delivered his message to Congress asking for a declaration of war against Germany. Jouett would be seated somewhere on the floor. Marion placed a small X on the photo to indicate where she was seated in the front row of the balcony (see arrow).

On this day, President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress to declare war against Germany, saying, He ended his address by saying:

“It is a distressing and oppressive duty, gentlemen of the Congress, which I have performed in thus addressing you. There are, it may be, many months of fiery trial and sacrifice ahead of us. It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance. But the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts -- for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free. To such a task we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other.”

Four days later, Congress voted overwhelmingly in favor of a war declaration.



Jouett Shouse c1918



Elizabeth, Marion Shouse, and Marion c. 1919