

# University of Miami Special Collections

## Finding Aid - James M. Carson papers (ASM0288)

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# James M. Carson papers

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## Table of contents

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Summary information .....	3
Administrative history / Biographical sketch .....	3
Scope and content .....	4
Notes .....	4
Access points .....	5
Series descriptions .....	5

## Summary information

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<b>Repository:</b>	University of Miami Special Collections
<b>Title:</b>	James M. Carson papers
<b>ID:</b>	ASM0288
<b>Date:</b>	1915-1916 (date of creation)
<b>Physical description:</b>	0.25 linear ft.
<b>Language:</b>	English
<b>Dates of creation, revision and deletion:</b>	

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## Administrative history / Biographical sketch

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### Note

South Florida attorney James Milton Carson actively promoted drainage and reclamation of the Florida Everglades during the first quarter of the 20th century. In 1915, Carson convinced Judge Ion Farris to make drainage the central issue in his gubernatorial campaign platform. Although Farris lost the election, the drainage issue returned to the forefront of state politics.

The issue of drainage in the Everglades played a role in Florida politics since the mid-1800's. Many of Florida's early farmers hoped to transform the Everglades into viable farmlands. In 1848 the state legislature requested that the federal government donate all Florida swamp lands "on the condition that the State will drain them and apply the proceeds of the sale...to purposes of education." The Congress agreed to the grant as long as "the proceeds of said lands, ... be applied, exclusively, ...to the purpose of reclaiming said lands." Subsequent governors and legislators violated these conditions, frequently offering drainage lands as "incentives" to railroad companies. Progressive governors in the early 1900's reclaimed much of the land promised to railroads, and Governor William Bonaparte Broward initiated a vast drainage project in 1906. The Florida Internal Improvement Fund and a state drainage tax financed the purchase of dredging machines and other expenses.

Following Broward's term as governor, drainage funds were depleted and the Drainage Board, created by the legislature in 1907, failed to collect sufficient taxes to maintain drainage operations. Sales of drainage lands financed a portion of the dredging work, but investors were reluctant to purchase swamp lands once the drainage process had slowed. By 1915, with no significant progress on the horizon, a group of Ft. Lauderdale residents organized a "Back to Broward League," dedicated to justice for the "20,000 men and women in the United States who have bought Everglades land."

Carson sought to restore Broward's plan for rapid and comprehensive drainage of the Everglades by convincing an elected official of its merits. Carson believed that "The work will not be accomplished satisfactorily until we have in power a man who has

the project at heart, who realizes its magnitude and importance, who will give it attention, ... that man can either be the governor or someone put in charge by the state..." Carson convinced Judge Ion Farris to support the reinstitution of Broward's project.

Farris, a Democratic candidate in the 1916 gubernatorial race, lost in the primary, but he did publicize the drainage matter, forcing the other candidates to address the issue.

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## Scope and content

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The Carson papers contain correspondence, newspaper clippings, outlines and drafts of campaign speeches. The materials, dated 1915-16, document Carson's efforts to enlist a candidate in support of drainage of the Everglades, his efforts on behalf of the Farris campaign, and his views on the drainage issue. Correspondence also provides information on the activities of other groups supporting the Farris campaign, including the Everglade Drainage and Development League, "the Commercial Bodies of Miami and Ft. Lauderdale" and the Boards of Trade of Dania and Pompano. Additional letters and newspaper clippings provide supporting documentation on the role of the drainage issue in the 1916 gubernatorial campaign.

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## Notes

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### Title notes

### Restrictions on access

This collection is open for research.

### Conditions governing use

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### Related material

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Papers, 1890-1998  
Oliver Griswold Papers, 1957-1960

### Other notes

- **Publication status:** Published
- **Description identifier:** ArchonInternalCollectionID:90

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## Access points

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- Everglades Drainage and Development League
- Broward, Napoleon Bonaparte, 1857-1910 (subject)
- Carson, James M. (James Milton), 1887-1950 (subject)
- Farris, Ion (subject)
- Drainage -- Florida -- Everglades (subject)
- Everglades (Fla.) (place)

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## Series descriptions

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Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
id25583	File -			1
id25584	File - Correspondence and Documents	27 May 1915 - 18 March 1916		1 1
id25585	File - Correspondence and Documents	19 March 1916 - 28 April 1916		1 2
id25586	File - Correspondence and Documents	29 April 16 - 6 June 1916		1 3