

WABASH VALLEY

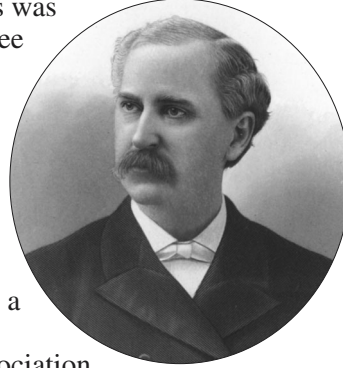
P R O F I L E S

A series of tributes to hometown heroes who have made a difference.

George W. Faris

Terre Haute lawyer George Washington Faris was nearly invincible as a politician, serving three consecutive terms as congressman.

Born on a farm near Renssalaer, Ind., on June 9, 1854, George was the son of James C. and Margaret (Brown) Faris. He grew up in Medaryville in nearby Pulaski County. While attending Asbury College (now DePauw University), Faris taught school during alternative terms to earn his expenses before obtaining a job as clerk with Greencastle attorney Solomon Claypool, a former Vigo County judge. The association



was fruitful. George not only earned his degree and was admitted to the Indiana bar in 1877 but met and married Claypool's daughter Anna. The couple had two children: George Mortimer and Ruby Claypool Faris.

In October 1880 Faris permanently located in Terre Haute to practice law with George C. Duy. A year later, he joined Samuel R. Hamill in partnership, quickly earning an excellent reputation. Aided by his relationship with Judge Claypool, an important force in Indiana Republican circles, he also became active in politics. In 1884, Faris lost a bid to defeat popular incumbent William Mack for Vigo County Circuit Court judge by only 270 votes. Beginning in 1888, Faris was selected Vigo County Republican chairman and served four years. In 1891 he was appointed county attorney.

At friends' urging, Faris entered the 1894 race to be the Republican nominee for Congress. The competition was formidable. Col. Thomas Henry Nelson, esteemed ambassador under presidents Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant, was a contender as were Congressman James T. Johnston and Elias S. Holliday of Brazil. On Aug. 9, 1894, Faris won the nomination on the fourth ballot and won the election with ease by 2,569 votes. Despite redistricting, he was returned to office in 1896 and 1898.

Faris chose not to seek re-election in 1900 for personal reasons. His son, also a DePauw University alumnus, was attending National Law School in Washington D.C. and Faris wanted to re-establish a practice in Terre Haute so the two could work together. Holliday succeeded him in Congress. The Faris law partnership ended tragically and prematurely when George M. Faris died of typhoid fever in Terre Haute at age 28 on Oct. 6, 1907, about one year after his marriage to Saidee Spaulding of Chicago.

Anna Claypool Faris died of appendicitis on Aug. 30, 1909, and Congressman Faris passed away at age 59 on April 16, 1914. The family is buried at Terre Haute's Highland Lawn Cemetery. Daughter Ruby married Lt. Col. Maurice Emerson Tennant of Indianapolis, where she died on Dec. 2, 1965.

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