



R. L. FARIS 1868-1932

## OBITUARY.

**ROBERT LEE FARIS, died October 5, 1932.**

Captain Robert Lee FARIS died unexpectedly at his home in Washington, D.C., on October 5, 1932. He was born at Caruthersville, Mo., on January 13, 1868, the son of James White and Willie Ann (STOVALL) FARIS. His early education was in public schools. In 1886 he entered the University of Missouri, from which he graduated as a civil engineer in 1890. After serving for a year with the Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, on the survey of the Missouri River, he entered the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey as a recorder on May 12, 1891. On May 4, 1893, he was appointed temporary aid and shortly after was given a permanent appointment in the field force. He rose to the position of Assistant Director in 1915, in which he served until his death.

His field experience in the Coast and Geodetic Survey was varied and interesting. From 1893 to 1895, he was a member of the triangulation parties engaged in extending the arc of transcontinental triangulation across the Rocky Mountains. This work involved the occupation of peaks 12,000 to 14,000 feet in height in remote and almost inaccessible locations and observations over lines having a maximum length of 183 miles. In 1896 he made field magnetic observations, and assisted in the determination of the difference of the astronomical longitude between Albany, N.Y., and Montreal, Canada.

From 1898 to 1900 he was assigned to parties engaged in the survey of the Yukon delta, Bering Sea, Alaska, and served at various times on the survey ships *Taku*, *Yukon* and *Patterson*. This work was of material value to the shipping which greatly increased as a result of the stampede to the new gold fields of Alaska. During the season of 1901, he was executive officer of the survey ship *McArthur* which was engaged on hydrographic surveys in the vicinity of Sanak Island and along the Alaska Peninsula.

From 1902 to 1906 Captain FARIS served as commanding officer of the survey ships *Blake* and *Explorer*, making surveys along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts and in Puerto Rico. During this period he successfully demonstrated the practicability of making magnetic observations at sea for dip, total intensity and variation. As a result of this pioneer work, the other ships of the service were equipped with magnetic instruments, and a large volume of data in this hitherto little explored field was accumulated. The success attained by the Coast and Geodetic Survey in making magnetic observations at sea led to the magnetic survey of the oceans by the Department of Terrestrial Magnetism of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, D.C., and its attendant benefits to the shipping of the world.

When Dr. Louis A. BAUER, Inspector of Magnetic Work of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, was chosen to become the head of the Department of Terres-

trial Magnetism of the Carnegie Institution, it was but logical that Captain FARIS should be his successor in the Survey's magnetic work. In September, 1906, he was appointed Inspector of Magnetic Work and Chief of the Division of Terrestrial Magnetism. Under his direction, notable progress was made in the magnetic survey of the United States, and marked improvements in instruments and methods were accomplished. Captain FARIS took an active interest in problems of magnetic research, and was the author of several publications on the subject, all of which showed careful thought and an intimate knowledge of that field.

During the period from about 1907 to 1910, Captain FARIS was a member of the Naval Battalion of the District of Columbia. He rose to the rank of Lieutenant Commander, and served as executive officer of the U.S.S. *Ozark*.

In November, 1914, he was appointed Assistant Inspector of Hydrography and Topography, and in March, 1915, was made Assistant Director of the Coast and Geodetic Survey.

During the World War, while the Director was absent on military duty, Captain FARIS, as Acting Director, ably guided the Survey through that trying period during which many of the experienced officers were on duty with the armed forces of the nation.

In 1919, Captain FARIS was appointed a member of the Mississippi River Commission, and he continued in that capacity until his death.

Captain FARIS was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; a member of the Committee on Navigation and Nautical Instruments of the Navigational Research Council; of the Federal Board of Surveys and Maps; the Washington Academy of Sciences; the Philosophical Society of Washington (President, 1921); the Washington Society of Engineers (President, 1921); the American Society of Civil Engineers; the American Astronomical Society; the American Geophysical Union; the Society of American Military Engineers; the Geological Society of Washington; the International Association of Navigation Congresses; and the Cosmos Club.

An earnest scholar, an untiring worker, a quick thinker, endowed with a clear vision and a remarkable memory, Captain FARIS possessed the basic attributes of the successful engineer and administrator. He enjoyed his labour and inspired respect and loyalty. A visit to his office was a visit with a friend, for the affectionate regard in which he was held was mutual. His broad knowledge and his sound personal judgment of all sciences relating to the activities of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, combined with a kindly generous spirit, prompted him to assist all who sought his counsel. An excellent writer himself, he was a helpful critic of the work of others.

The death of Captain FARIS is a personal loss to his many friends in the Coast and Geodetic Survey and elsewhere, in whose thoughts his memory will always linger as a true gentleman and a lovable character.

In 1897, Captain FARIS married Carrie Elizabeth HELLEN, who survives him. He is also survived by two sons and three daughters: Robert Lee, Jr.; Helen Mills (MYERS); Carolyn (WHEELER); Elizabeth R. (SHORT); and Charles William FARIS.