



## **Black Jack (Mo.) Collection (S0007)**

**Collection Number:** S0007

**Collection Title:** Black Jack (Mo.) Collection

**Dates:** 1972-1976

**Creator:** City of Black Jack, Missouri

**Abstract:** In an attempt to stop the Park View Heights Corporation from building an integrated housing complex in Black Jack, Missouri, the Municipality adopted a zoning ordinance forbidding multiple-family dwellings in 1970. Park View Heights Corporation filed a lawsuit against the City of Black Jack in 1971, stating the city's motivations for restrictive zoning were racial. At the same time, the U.S. Department of Justice also filed a suit against the City of Black Jack for similar reasons. In 1972, U.S. District Judges Roy Harper and James H. Meredith accepted the city's denial of racial motivation. In 1974 the U.S. Eight Circuit Court of Appeals overturned that decision and struck down the ordinance, and the City of Black Jack was forced to allow the construction of Park View Heights. The collection includes court documents, memoranda, newspaper clippings, and a University of Missouri-St. Louis student paper.

**Collection Size:** 0.05 cubic foot  
(13 Folders)

**Language:** Collection materials are in English.

**Repository:** The State Historical Society of Missouri

**Restrictions on Access:** Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at [stlouis@shsmo.org](mailto:stlouis@shsmo.org). Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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**Preferred Citation:** [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Black Jack (Mo.) Collection* (S0007); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-St. Louis].

**Donor Information:** The papers were donated to the University of Missouri by Roy Bergmann on July 22, 1975 (Accession No. SA0659). An addition was made on April 28, 1976 by Marie Vitale (Accession No. SA0818).

**Related Material:** Additional materials related to the Black Jack (Mo.) Collection can be found in the following collection:

*James H. Meredith Papers* (S0934)

**Processed by:** Processed by AJ Medlock and Zachary Palitzsch, January 2020

**Historical Note:**

In 1969, the Inter-Religious Center for Urban Affairs (ICUA) began planning Park View Heights as a way to provide low- and moderate-income housing. The idea was that this low-income housing project was a way for people trapped in the St. Louis ghetto to escape. With funding help from the Federal Housing Administration, ICUA chose 12 acres of unincorporated St. Louis County land on Old Jamestown Road to start construction.

As a result, a citizens group formed to incorporate Black Jack as a city. In 1970, a petition containing 1425 signatures was filed at the St. Louis County Clerk's office to incorporate the City of Black Jack, and it became an official city. Soon after Black Jack became a city, the Black Jack City Council passed an exclusionary zoning law to prohibit the construction of multiple-family units. The Park View Heights Corporation filed suit against the City of Black Jack on January 7, 1971, stating that the city's proposed zoning law would have a discriminatory impact on minority families, essentially keeping them sequestered to low-income housing in the inner city. However, on December 21, 1971, District Judge Roy Harper ruled against Park View Heights, and the case was dismissed, denying the city's racial motivation in prohibiting the construction of multiple-family units.

Concurrently, another suit was happening against the City of Black Jack. The United States Department of Justice filed a suit against Black Jack on June 14, 1971 just six months following the start of the Park View Heights case. The Department of Justice stated that the eventual outcome of Black Jack's zoning ordinance was to perpetuate racial segregation. Thus, it impeded rights that were guaranteed under the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and by the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Amendments of the United States Constitution. United States District Judge James H. Meredith presided over this case. On March 30, 1972, Judge Meredith concluded that there was not enough evidence of racial discrimination and denied the Justice Department to force Black Jack to allow construction of Park View Heights. Six months later, on September 25, The Eighth Circuit Court overturned Meredith's decision after receiving an appeal request from both the Park View Heights and the Department of Justice. On March 19, 1973, the trial of *United States v. City of Black Jack* began. In December 1974, the Eighth Circuit Court ruled that Black Jack's ordinance would have a disparate impact on minority families, and therefore, the ordinance was found invalid. The City of Black Jack was ordered by the Federal Government to allow the development of low- and moderate-income housing and also was forced to pay Park View Heights \$450,000.

**Arrangement:** This collection has been arranged alphabetically into 13 folders.

**Scope and Content Note:**

This collection contains memoranda, correspondence, court transcripts, court briefs, newspaper clippings, and a paper on urban planning relating to the cases surrounding the City of Black Jack's controversial approval of an exclusionary zoning law. The majority of the materials in this collection were gathered by Roy Bergmann, who served as an attorney for the City of Black Jack during the Park View Heights Corporation v. City of Black Jack trial. The materials document both the Park View Heights trial and the United States v. City of Black Jack pre-trial. Gaps in this collection exist, as it does not include legal materials documenting the United States v. Black Jack trial in its entirety. However, the case is chronicled by Marie Vitale's paper, "The Black Jack Controversy." Items of interest include a court brief from the United States v. Parma, Ohio case, which also involved racial discrimination in housing in Parma, Ohio, one of the largest suburbs of Cleveland. The materials in this collection date from 1972 to 1976 and are arranged chronologically.

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	f. 10	United States vs. Parma, Ohio, Court Brief, 1973
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Box 002	f. 13	"Black Jack Controversy," paper by Marie Vitale, Urban Planning and Politics, 1976

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