



McDonald County Secession Papers (SP0013)

Collection Number: SP0013

Collection Title: McDonald County Secession Papers

Dates: 1961-2015

Creator: Smither, Erin, 1981-

Abstract: The McDonald County Secession papers contain photocopied newspaper articles dealing with the publicity surrounding the McDonald County secession hoax from Missouri in 1961.

Collection Size: .2 cubic foot
(4 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-Springfield](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at springfield@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

Restrictions on Use: The Donor has given, assigned, and transferred to the Society all copyrights, and associated rights the Donor may possess in the materials.

Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *McDonald County Secession Papers* (SP0013); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Springfield [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Springfield].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Erin Smither on May 23, 2016 (Accession No. SPA0015).

Processed by: Processed by Katie Seale, July 25, 2016

Historical Note:

McDonald County stated their intent to secede from the state of Missouri after an error by the Missouri State Highway Commission. In their annual Family Vacationland Map, Noel, Pineville, and Southwest City in McDonald County were left off the map, which impacted their tourist business. To make a point and garner tourist attention, town leaders and residents created the McDonald Territory with the city of Noel serving as the capital. The new ‘territory’ formed a territorial government and a militia was raised. The publicity surrounding the ‘secession’ created a boom in tourist and media attention.

The publicity stunts included citizens dressed in Civil War era/wild west attire and staged a war in Noel. Also, there was a land run in April 1961 and territorial boundary signage put in place. The new ‘territory’ even wrote to the Arkansas state government about joining the state as the state’s new ‘boothel’ county. They also established an embassy in the town of Joplin located in Jasper County.

Z.L. ‘Zeke’ McGowan, a retired local electrician and owner of Hillbilly Gifts store in Noel, spearheaded much of the propaganda surrounding the ‘secession’ and was eventually elected provisional president of the new ‘territory.’

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following four series:

- Newspaper Articles
- Correspondence
- Scholarly Articles
- Map

Scope and Content Note:

Newspaper Articles

This series contains photocopied articles from 1961 to 1962 pertaining to McDonald County’s ‘secession.’ Many of the newspaper articles deal with the differing propaganda campaigns orchestrated throughout the county during 1961, much of which was led by McGowen and his ‘government.’

Correspondence

This series consists of photocopied letters from David Burlson, Arkansas State Representative from Washington County, to Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus and Z.L. McGowan in regards to Arkansas annexing McDonald County. The other letter is from representatives of the Chamber of Commerce in Joplin, Missouri, about establishing an embassy for McDonald Territory in Joplin. There is also a copy of a McDonald Territory Visa and Senate Resolution No. 51 from McDonald County that states their intent to secede.

Scholarly Articles

This series contains articles about the secession from 2011 and 2015. These summarize what occurred in McDonald County in 1961.

Map

This series contains an original 1961 Missouri Map put out by the State Highway Commission, in which the city of Noel is omitted.

Container List:

- f. 1 Newspaper articles, 1961-62, 1973
- f. 2 Correspondence, 1961
- f. 3 Scholarly articles, 2011-2015
- f. 4 Official highway map, Missouri, 1961

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Bachler, Lee Aaron, 1925-1979	1
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Harmon, Forrest, 1894-1965	1
Joplin (Mo.)	2
McDonald County (Mo.)	1-4
McGowen, Z.L. 'Zeke'	1-3
Saugee, Henry	1
Southwest City (Mo.)	1
Yocum, Robert	1