

COLORADO GOVERNORS

Jesse F. McDonald



Scope and Content Note

This governor's collection comprises fifteen cubic feet of material related to Jesse F. McDonald during the two years (1905-1907) he served as governor of the state. Record series included in the collection are the Executive Record; correspondence; extraditions and requisitions; proclamations; speeches and messages; appointments; and reports. The materials date essentially from 1905-1907, although there are a few items that precede and post date the official term. The physical condition of the collection is generally good.

Biography

Jesse F. McDonald was born on June 30, 1858, at Ashtabula, Ohio, the son of Lyman M. and Caroline (Bond) McDonald. His ancestors came from Scotland during the middle of the eighteenth century, settling first in Maine and then Oneida

County, New York, before moving to Ohio.

Jesse grew up and was educated at his birthplace. After completing his schooling, he studied civil engineering and surveying. In 1879, at the age of twenty one, he moved west to the turbulent mining camp of Leadville, Colorado, with \$2.00 left in his pocket. He took the first job he could find as a draftsman for a mining company but soon got a job as a chainman for a surveying crew. He quickly realized that this work would familiarize him with the numerous mining possibilities in the region.

In the years that followed, he showed a remarkable aptitude for civil and mine engineering and in 1884 formed a lucrative partnership with George M. Robinson. Later, he became the owner of the Penrose Mine in Lake County, the Harvard Mine and other mining properties. He also became interested in local banking enterprises which eventually led him to become director and vice president of the American National Bank at Leadville.

In a city normally Democratic, McDonald as a Republican candidate, was elected mayor of Leadville for three successive terms from 1899 to 1905. He was also elected state senator, representing Lake County. In 1904, he was nominated as Lieutenant Governor and was elected to that position by a decisive majority. Alva Adams won as governor and took office in January, 1905.

When the legislature met a few days later, Adams' election was contested by James H. Peabody, the Republican candidate. For weeks, legislators at the capitol and citizens of the state seethed as the battle over the governorship continued. Finally, Peabody was seated on condition that he would immediately resign to be succeeded by Jesse F. McDonald. Colorado thus had three governors in a twenty four hour period on March 16, 1905!

McDonald's term of office was noted for the quiet and businesslike manner in which he conducted the affairs of state, and it was one of the most prosperous periods the state had enjoyed up to that time. As governor, he was particularly zealous in his protection of state lands. On one occasion, when coal on state land was to be sold, the governor made a trip to Walsenburg himself to put his engineering knowledge to work to appraise the property and assure the state of a fair price.

Although urged to run for governor again in 1906, McDonald declined and returned to private life. In 1908, he was prevailed upon to run again, but was defeated by John F. Shafroth. In 1910 he extended his political service by being named chairman of the Republican State Central Committee, a position he filled until 1914. He again served as Republican chairman from 1931 to 1934 and in 1932 headed the Colorado delegation to the Republican National Convention. During these years McDonald divided his interests between politics and mining and devoted years of unstinting effort to the affairs of the Colorado Mining Association, the American Mining Congress and the state metal mining fund.

Jesse McDonald married Flora Collins in Leadville on April 26, 1890. Following her death in 1918 he married Madaline Harrington in 1924. There were no children born in either marriage. He died on February 25, 1942, in Denver. Instead of a burial, his ashes were scattered.

Governor Peabody's Resignation from March 17, 1905. This document may be viewed in pdf format, however the Adobe® Reader is required. You may download the reader free of charge from the Adobe® web site.

Bibliography - Jesse F. McDonald

- Griswold, Don L. and Jean G. History of Leadville and Lake County Colorado. Denver, University Press of Colorado, 1996.
- Records of the Office of the Governor, Jesse F. McDonald, 1905-1907. Colorado State Archives.
- Smiley, Jerome C. Semi-Centennial History of the State of Colorado. Volume II. Chicago, Lewis Publishing Co., 1913.
- Stone, Wilbur Fisk. History of Colorado. Chicago, S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1918.
- Denver Post. February 26, 1942, pg. 1.
- Rocky Mountain News, February 26, 1942, pg. 1.

Series Descriptions

Executive Record

The Executive Record contains executive orders; appointments; legislative messages; pardons; extraditions and requisitions; honorary citations; and proclamations which were issued by Governor McDonald during his term of office from 1905-1907.

Correspondence

Included in this series is correspondence between Governor McDonald and his constituents, state agencies, and other public officials. The correspondence is organized generally by subject. There are some files on the San Francisco earthquake, women's suffrage, and the St. Louis World's Fair.

Speeches and Messages

McDonald's Biennial Message to the 16th General Assembly comprises this series.

Proclamations

This series consists of Executive Proclamations issued by the governor and deposited as filings in the Office of the Secretary of State.

Applications and Appointments

One cubic foot of records documenting gubernatorial appointments to state agency offices and various boards and commissions are included in this series.

Reports

This series consists of three cubic feet of records consisting primarily of reports to state agencies.

Extraditions and Requisitions

This series includes documentation concerning the surrendering of alleged criminals to a different jurisdiction for trial. Documentation may include the application for extradition, the warrant for arrest, and correspondence from the Attorney General's office concerning the extradition.