

# Missouri State Archives

## Finding Aid RG 998.378

### Manuscript Collections

#### Governor Joseph McClurg Collection

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*Abstract:* Photographs and one document related to Missouri Governor Joseph Washington McClurg, 1855-1934.

*Extent:* 0.12 Cubic feet.

*Record Description:* Photographs, paper.

*Alternative Formats:* TIF.

*Location:* Missouri State Archives.

### Administrative Information

*Access Restrictions:* Access to original glass plate is restricted due to its fragile nature; staff supervision is required.

*Publication Restrictions:* Copyright is in the public domain. Items reproduced for online or physical publication should carry the credit line: Courtesy of the Missouri State Archives.

*Preferred Citation:* [Item description], [Date]; [Box and Folder]; [Series]; Governor Joseph McClurg Collection, Record Group 998.378; Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City.

*Acquisition Information:* Donations. Accession Numbers 1989-0027, 1989-0028, 1989-0029, 1989-0030, and 2011-0054.

*Processing Information:* Processing completed by Erika Woehlk on 05/22/2018. Last updated by EW on 12/04/2025.

### Historical and Biographical Notes

*Quoted from Finding Aid 3.19 by Becky Carlson and Sharon E. Brock, 05/22/2018:*

Joseph Washington McClurg was born in St. Louis County, Missouri Territory on February 22, 1818 to Joseph and Mary Brotherton McClurg. He was orphaned early and was raised in Ohio by his paternal grandparents. McClurg attended Xenia Academy and

Oxford (Ohio) College before teaching school in Mississippi and Louisiana in 1835 and 1836.

After a stint as sheriff in St. Louis County where he worked for his uncle James Brotherton, McClurg moved to Columbus, Texas in 1839. He studied law, was admitted to the Texas Bar, and served as clerk of a circuit court for the next two years. During this time, McClurg regularly corresponded with Mary Johnson whom he had met in Farmington, Missouri. Mary C. Johnson married Joseph Washington McClurg in Ste. Genevieve, Missouri on October 18, 1841. The couple would have eight children before the death of Mary McClurg and two of her children in 1861.

William Murphy, the stepfather of Mary Johnson McClurg, was a successful businessman and entrepreneur. McClurg began a commercial association with Murphy and McClurg which would last for years. McClurg caught gold fever in 1849 and traveled to the California gold fields. Operating a successful mercantile in California, he returned to Missouri in 1852, settling in Linn Creek. He joined relatives at Linn Creek on the Osage River to establish a mercantile firm known as McClurg, Murphy and Jones. The site was an ideal steamboat landing and in 1855 a new county seat was established at Linn Creek.

At the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, McClurg organized the Osage Regiment of the Missouri Volunteers and the Hickory County Battalion for the U.S. Army. After the death of his wife in October, he assigned the care of his remaining family to friends and relatives and focused on military matters. Although McClurg attended the emancipation convention in Jefferson City in June of 1862, he did not free his own slaves until just prior to the Emancipation Proclamation.

The following November, Joseph Washington McClurg was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives as a Radical Republican. He would serve the 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District for three terms. McClurg's espoused strong Unionist views and in retaliation, rebel sympathizers in Linn Creek burned his mercantile twice. By March of 1863, the losses totaled more than \$150,000. His business partner, E. B. Torbert fled to St. Louis with the remaining resources from the mercantile. It would take the governor years to retire his debts and interest payments; and settle with Torbert's demands for financial compensation over merchandise that McClurg had given in support of the Union.

Radical Republicans nominated him as their candidate for the 1868 Missouri gubernatorial election. McClurg defeated Democratic Congressman John S. Phelps of Springfield and was sworn in as the 19<sup>th</sup> Governor of Missouri on January 31, 1869. Among his first acts as Governor, McClurg purged opposition among state employees and required the remainder donate 5% of their salaries to the Radical Republican campaign fund.

Fiscally conservative, his administration cut the state debt by half. He also recommended passage of legislation forbidding the sale of alcohol; forbade the consumption of alcoholic beverages in the governor's residence; and accepted no gifts. Within the first

year, Governor McClurg accepted the return of the state seal from former Confederate Governor Thomas Cate Reynolds.

During his two-year term of office, McClurg received members of the Missouri women's suffrage movement at the official residence and signed their petition; 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, giving Negroes the right to vote, was adopted in 1870; the Eads bridge at St. Louis was built; the School of Mines and Metallurgy was established at Rolla; and the college of agriculture was located at Columbia.

Meanwhile, differing governance philosophies lead to increasing strife within McClurg's Republican Party. Members of the Party disenchanted with Radical restrictions on voting and citizenship rights and realizing that business relationships with former Confederates were crucial to Missouri's post war recovery, split off and established the Liberal Republican Party. Under the leadership of Benjamin Gratz Brown and with support from the Democratic Party, Brown and Liberal Republicans defeated McClurg and the Radicals in the 1870 gubernatorial election by a landslide.

In 1871, Joseph Washington McClurg returned to Linn Creek to resume his business enterprises. Along with his sons-in-law Charles Draper and Marshall Johnson, McClurg founded Draper, McClurg and Company. Merchandising profits funded surface mining on lead and iron in the Central Lead District near the Osage River. The firm operated steamboats on the Missouri and Osage Rivers and their landings became trade centers for the shipment of railroad ties. The company gained government contracts for the removal of sandbars on the Osage River. By 1885, falling profits lead to the seizure of one of the steamboats by creditors and within a year, McClurg sold his Camden County properties.

After a brief spell homesteading in South Dakota, McClurg returned to Lebanon and in 1889, he received an appointment as government land office receiver in Springfield. He returned to Lebanon in 1893 and on December 2, 1900, Joseph Washington McClurg died at the home of Charles and Frances McClurg Draper. He is interred in Lebanon City Cemetery, Laclede County, Missouri.

## Additional Descriptive Information

### Related Material

MS308 Rosemary Hammen Schryock Collection: McClurg letter

MS509 H. Dwight Weaver Collection: photos of McClurg's mansion and boats named for him

RG3.19 Joseph Washington McClurg, 1869-1871: official Governor's papers

The State Historical Society of Missouri in Columbia holds the following collections related to Governor McClurg:

[#C1678 Joseph Washington McClurg Papers, 1869](#)

[#C1746 Joseph Washington McClurg Telegram, 1869](#)

[#C3069 Draper-McClurg Family Papers, 1838-2009](#)

**Series**

The records are organized into the following series:

Document, 1869

Photographs, 1855-1934

## Document, 1869

*Extent:* 1 Folder, 0.06 cubic feet.

*Arrangement:* N/a.

### Scope and Content

This is a faded, water-damaged certificate recognizing J.W. McClurg for his service during the Civil War. The certificate is signed by him as Governor, as well as the Speaker of the House, Adjutant General, and Lieutenant Governor. The certificate has intricate etchings all around it, including portraits and military scenes.

#### Etchings, clockwise from upper left:

- Soldiers and a Black child on a wooden boat, men in the center holding flags.
- Vignette portrait of Gov. Joseph W. McClurg.
- A family stands worriedly at their front door, the man armed with a gun. The family dog chases away an armed man on horseback.
- Bald eagle holding an American flag in its talons. The flag drapes around a vignette portrait of Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman (Union).
- Hissing snake wrapped around a torch, surrounded by flags and instruments of war: cannonballs, swords, powder horn.
- Two ironclad boats (invented by St. Louisan James B. Eads) on the water, a wooden ship in the background: splashes, presumably from fired ordnance.
- Vignette portrait of Gen. Nathaniel Lyon (Union) etched onto a stone monument draped with cloth: shield, daggers, wreaths on the monument's steps. Lyon was killed in Missouri in the first year of the Civil War.
- Allegorical scene of two figures – a woman and a man – floating above the ground, moving from peace (left) to war (right). The peaceful scene shows a healthy rose bush, a farmer guiding a plow behind two horses, trees, river plants, a river (probably the Mississippi), and a building on the far bank. The war scene shows a ravaged landscape with dead brambles, a toppled pedestal and wheel, shields lying on the ground, a dead horse, tents, and a bat in flight. The hovering couple (accompanied by a pair of doves) sprinkles rosebuds over the brambles and wear Greek wreaths (chaplets) in their hair.
- A similar hissing snake scene to the one on the right.
- Vignette portrait of Gen. Ulysses S. Grant (Union) surrounded by a draped flag carried in the talons of a bald eagle.
- An artistic interpretation of the Great Seal of the State of Missouri depicting the center shield with helmet, slogan (United We Stand Divided We Fall), U.S. coat of arms, crescent moon, and grizzly bear; the state motto on a ribbon (Salus Populi Suprema Lex Esto); and a pair of large grizzly bears. The bear on the right is crouching and growling menacingly, which is not characteristic of how the seal is normally represented.

Text on the certificate reads,

The State of Missouri. To J.W. McClurg. You, having borne an honorable part as a Volunteer from the State of Missouri in the service of the United States in suppressing the Rebellion and thereby maintaining the integrity of the Union, the perpetuity of Republican Institutions, and the liberties and peace of the people: Now therefore we Commissioners appointed by the Act of the Legislature present you this testimonial to your patriotism, fidelity, courage and suffering in the common cause. Given at Jefferson City this fourth day of July in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the ninety third.

Signed Jno. C. Orrick (Speaker of the House), Geo. L. Childress (Adj. Genl.), J.W. McClurg (Governor), and E.O. Stanard (Lieut. Governor).

The certificate is digitized as a 600dpi .tif available in-house and can be viewed online as a .jpg through Missouri Digital Heritage here:

<https://mdh.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16795coll39/id/1020/rec/1>.

### Container List

Location	Box	Folder	Contents	Date
	OB51	3	19.375" x 15.625" original certificate. The certificate was mounted on an acid-free heavy paper mat in March 1989 by Columbia Photo. Includes a color replica.	07/04/1869

## Photographs, 1855-1934

*Extent:* 2 Photographs, 0.06 cubic feet.

*Arrangement:* Chronological.

### Scope and Content

Two photographs related to the life of Missouri Gov. Joseph W. McClurg. These photographs are digitized and available on Manuscript DVD #4 in Reference as well as the Z Drive.

### Container List

Location	Box	Folder	Contents	Date
	#0004891296		Original framed 7"x9" glass plate negative showing Joseph McClurg, his wife Mary, and two other men at the top of Niagara Falls, New York.	1855
	166	1A	5"x7" copy print of the Niagara Falls photograph.	1855
	166	1	Mounted silver photograph of Governor McClurg's former residence, Linn Creek, MO, as it looked in 1934.	1934