

John H. McDowell Papers, 1853-1884 (.44 cu. ft.)

Processed by Susan D. Wheatley, November 2002

Restrictions

None.

Biographical Sketch

John Harvie McDowell (1826-1883) was born in Spotsylvania, VA to Joseph Jefferson McDowell and Sarah Allen McCube. He married Isabelle "Belle" Amelia Rodes (11 Sep 1832 - 19 Oct 1915) in Madison Co., KY 22 December 1852. She was the daughter of William Rodes and Pauline Clay Rodes, a granddaughter of Green Clay and a niece of Cassius M. Clay. At the time of his marriage, McDowell was a businessman in Cincinnati. John and Isabelle had eight children:

1. Pauline Rodes McDowell (12 Oct 1853 - 3 Aug 1854)
2. Joseph Jefferson McDowell (31 Mar 1856 - 1903)
3. William Rodes McDowell (6 Apr 1861 - after 1938)
4. John Harvie McDowell (30 Oct 1863 - after 1938)
5. Green Clay McDowell (19 Oct 1868 - 28 Jun 1887)
6. Martha McDowell (7 May 1871 - 6 Apr 1938) married Dr. Frank M. Hanger 23 May 1893 and lived in Staunton, VA.
7. Eugene McDowell (6 Oct 1874 - 18 Aug 1875)
8. Belle Rodes McDowell (6 Apr 1877 - after 1938) married M. C. Woodbury.

In 1857 John McDowell became part owner of the Leavenworth, Pawnee and Western Railroad Company (L. P. & W.) along with James C. Stone, A.J. Isaccs, and Thomas Ewing Jr. These four men would continue to control the company. In 1863 the L. P. & W. became known as the Union Pacific, Eastern Division. This name change was decided upon because it reflected what the owners originally set out to accomplish, and it defined the role the railroad played in the country at the time. During his tenure with the railroad company he held the positions of board member and president. After the name change the board of directors was reorganized and McDowell was placed among the rest as directors with John C. Fremont as president. The creation of this railroad did not occur over night, it started out as a last chance effort by Thomas Ewing Jr. to make money after many failed attempts. It was not until Ewing needed financial backers that McDowell became involved. In 1857 control of the L. P. & W. Railroad lay in the hands of not only McDowell but also of James C. Stone, A.J. Isaccs, and Thomas Ewing, Jr. himself. These four men would continue to control the company. The process of turning this railroad into a business and not into another failed company was not an easy one. In the process of obtaining the land they needed to build upon they created a new treaty with the Delaware Indians which granted the L. P. & W. over two hundred thousand acres that they never paid for. Once the Civil War began, the men started lobbying even harder to obtain federal funds. Once they were granted these funds allowed the railroad to become transcontinental.

McDowell was elected state senator in Kansas on the Republican ballot in 1861. This was the first election held after Kansas attained statehood. His brother James L. McDowell also ran for state senator, and his oldest brother William C. McDowell ran for district judge for the First District of

Leavenworth, Kansas. An 1861 entry in Rutherford B. Hayes' diary (Ohio Historical Society) mentions that McDowell is a "senator and major in Kansas." By 1870 John Harvie McDowell had moved back to Richmond, KY where he became involved with the Three Forks Railroad. He died in Richmond in 1883.

Scope and Content Note

The John H. McDowell Papers consist of resolutions, receipts, stock certificates, deeds, lists of assets meeting notices, and correspondences that give some insight into the day to day operations of the Leavenworth, Pawnee and Western, the Kansas Pacific, and the Union Pacific, Eastern Division Railroads. Also included are telegrams from McDowell and other colleagues elsewhere in the United States. Included in these telegrams are pieces of information pertaining to their personal and professional life. Also included are lists of the stock holders and fees paid by those that had been loaned money.

The Mariposa Estate documents contain a letter relaying the condition of the estate upon purchase and the cost of purchasing the estate. The documents in this folder contain a list of current accounts held through the company including the previous balance and current balance, lists of real estate owned, a loan certificate and correspondence pertaining to the transfer of a stock certificate. [Ed. note: John C. Fremont purchased the Mariposa estate in 1847, a large tract of land in California that was thought to be worthless but which actually contained rich gold deposits. His title to this estate was contested, but after a long litigation the Supreme Court of the United States decided in his favor in 1855.]

Box List

- f.01 1863-1874, correspondence and documents pertaining to the Leavenworth, Pawnee, and Western railroad as well as the Kansas Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads. The majority of this material appears to relate to litigation involving John C. Fremont, Samuel Hallett, and the board of directors of the Union Pacific, Eastern Division as well as some correspondence relating to the Delaware Indians, the Colorado Central Pacific Railway, and day to day business operations. It includes a copy of Fremont's Amended Supplemental Complaint to the Supreme Court dated 25 Jan 1864. (51 documents)
- f.02 1863, correspondence and documents pertaining to the Leavenworth, Pawnee, and Western railroad as well as the Kansas Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads. Some of these documents pertain to John McDowell's resignation from the presidency as well as John C. Fremont giving up the right to hold stock in the company of the railroad in 1863. The letters shed light on the relationship between McDowell and Samuel Hallett in their bid to take control of the Union Pacific, Western Division away from Fremont. (42 documents)
- f.03 1863, correspondence and documents pertaining to the Leavenworth, Pawnee, and Western, and the Union Pacific, Eastern Division Railroads. Includes an interesting letter from Samuel Stinson, an attorney in Leavenworth, describing Quantrill's Lawrence, Kansas, raid in 1863, the use of negro laborers on the railroad and the use of police to hunt for workers with the motto "Either you go to work or be a vagabond." (56 documents)
- f.04 1852-1860, correspondence and documents pertaining to the Leavenworth, Pawnee, and Western, and the Union Pacific, Eastern Division Railroads. Includes a list of the original stockholders of the Leavenworth, Pawnee, and Western Railroad Co. and several letters regarding the Delaware lands. (14 documents)
- f.05 n.d., letters, inventories, stock certificates and notes pertaining to the Leavenworth, Pawnee, and Western, and the Union Pacific, Eastern Division Railroads. Includes a ca.1861 copy of the 1855 articles of incorporation for the Leavenworth, Pawnee, and Western Railroad. (42 documents)
- f.06 1873, correspondence and notes relating to McDowell's testimony against the Kansas Pacific Railroad Company. Includes documentation about the amount of money that exchanged hands and when it was paid to those involved in the buy out. Correspondence is between McDowell and St. Louis Circuit Court Judge John M. Krum. (4 documents)
- f.07 1864-1871, correspondence pertaining to the settlement with Jonathan Percy and Durant, men who purchased stock in the Union Pacific Railroad Company. This correspondence shows the process McDowell went through to obtain payment for work rendered and official recognition of his purchases. (16 documents)
- f.08 1863-1872, correspondence with his attorney Clark Bell (Bell was also Samuel Hallett's

attorney). This correspondences shows not only the professional relationship McDowell had with his attorney but the personal relationship they shared. Such news as the birth of a new child to Bell and his wife are shared along with bills that need to be paid by Bell for McDowell. (23 documents)

- f.09 1863, report on the cost and conditions for purchase of the Mariposa Estate. (3 documents)
- f.10 1853-1857, records of debts, that had been paid to the McMiken Company and accounts held by the public. (12 documents)
- f.11 1867, Gutta Percha Company stock certificate. (1 document and photocopy of original.) [Ed. note: Gutta-percha is a rubbery substance made from the sap of various southeast Asian trees. A variety of items was displayed by the Gutta-Percha Company at the Crystal Palace Exposition in 1851; the substance was, and still is, used for dental fillings, jewelry, decorative objects and golf balls.]
- f.12 1861-1864, newspaper clippings (4 regarding the Union Pacific Railroad, 5 about the Mariposa Company and one that appears to be advice to an aspiring attorney) and a campaign circular listing the “Republican Ticket” for Kansas in 1861. (10 clippings and 1 circular)
- f.13 1858-1867, correspondence pertaining to information of hiring foreign help and purchasing the Hallett home after Samuel Hallett’s death, receipts, and certificates. Some correspondents request McDowell’s presence in Kansas for the 1864 election and others contain requests for him to claim the property left to him by the late Samuel Hallett. (24 documents)
- f.14 1858-1864, correspondence, reports, receipts and calculations pertaining to land purchases. The letters cover topics such as renting property for other people and purchasing land in Kansas. (18 documents - 3 filed **oversize**)
- f.15 1884, copy of petition for administrative right over the McDowell Estate, and a document granting Belle McDowell guardianship of her minor children after John H. McDowell’s death. Correspondence instructing Belle on how to sign the papers to become the legal guardian of the minor children and to receive the money from his estate in Kansas. (4 documents)
- f. 16 1862; 1872, deeds for lands in Kansas. (2 documents)
- f. 17 Background and research information compiled to write the biographical sketch. Contains biographical or historical information on John C. Fremont, the Pacific Railway Act, the Leavenworth, Pawnee & Western Railroad Co., John M. Krum and the Kansas Pacific Railway Co. and collection separation record. From the Ohio Historical Society website, there are copies of pages from Rutherford B. Hayes’ diary that mention J.H. McDowell in 1851 and 1861. (no original documents in this folder)