

MSS. Collection #252

R.V. Gannon Papers, 1910-1951. 1 box (11 folders), 12 items.

NOTE: The numbers cited in parentheses, e.g. 1:5, refer the researcher to the Series#:Folder# in which that name/topic will be found.

INTRODUCTION

The R.V. Gannon Papers consist primarily of materials pertaining to the Junior Order United American Mechanics and also include a minute book for the Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union. Robert Vance (R.V.) Gannon was a Guilford County farmer and an officer in both organizations. The Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Order advocated for farmers' rights, while the Junior Order United American Mechanics promoted separation of church and state, Christian virtue, and anti-immigration sentiment. Researchers interested in American patriotic and fraternal organizations or the local history of McLeansville or Lexington, North Carolina, may find this collection useful.

Arrangement: This collection is organized into two series and arranged within series by document type. The series are: **Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union**, 1910-1912; and **Junior Order United American Mechanics**, 1917-1951.

Provenance: This collection was donated by Cheryl G. Lowe in April 2021 and assigned the accession number 2021.4.1. The donor is a granddaughter of Robert Vance Gannon.

Processing: This collection was organized and the finding aid was prepared by intern Rebecca Doss in June 2021.

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Robert Vance Gannon (1876-1971) was born in McLeansville and lived there his entire life. A farmer and deacon at Alamance Presbyterian Church, he served as secretary of the McLeansville chapter of the Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union in 1913. He later joined the South Buffalo Council of the Junior Order United American Mechanics, holding offices that included secretary, Outside Sentinel, councilor, and representative to the State Council. He married Millie Avis Starr in 1908, and the couple had at least seven children.

The Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union was founded in 1902 in Texas and advocated for farmers' rights to fair market access, direct election of senators, and women's suffrage. It later became known as the National Farmers' Union. Initially named the Union of Workers, the Order United American Mechanics was established during the anti-immigration riots of 1844-45 as an anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant patriotic organization. The Junior Order United American Mechanics was founded in 1853, and its membership quickly eclipsed its parent organization, declining only when the Great Depression made dues unaffordable. In 1925,

the Junior Order established a children's home in Lexington, known locally as the "Junior Home." Originally intended for the orphaned children of members, the home now serves the Lexington area as a whole under the name American Children's Home. It is interesting to note that the Junior Order had councils throughout the eastern United States in both urban and rural regions, and Guilford County had approximately 19 councils in 1951.

Biographical/Historical Sources: The biographical information about R.V. Gannon was obtained from materials in the collection, Ancestry.com, and his obituary (*Greensboro Daily News*, June 3, 1971). The historical information about the Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union and the American Children's Home was drawn from the organizations' official websites (<https://nfu.org/about/>; <https://www.ach-nc.org/>), while the history of the Junior Order United American Mechanics was found in the online [Phoenixmasonry Masonic Museum and Library](#).

SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE

The types of materials in this collection include minute books, other record books, correspondence, a receipt, and printed materials. The collection focuses on the Junior Order United American Mechanics and also includes a minute book from the Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union. R.V. Gannon, who served in several positions in the South Buffalo Council of the Junior Order and as secretary of the McLeansville chapter of the Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union, collected these materials. Researchers interested in American fraternal orders may find this collection useful for its details about the membership requirements, goals, and proceedings of both organizations. For researchers studying the history of Lexington, North Carolina, the State Council bulletin and proceedings provide information about the founding of the Junior Children's Home there.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

1. Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union. 1 folder (1 item). 1910-1912.

This series contains the secretary's minute book of the McLeansville chapter of the Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union of America. Notably, many of the members overlap with the Junior Order United American Mechanics. The minutes primarily detail initiations, committee elections, and the purchase of supplies.

2. Junior Order United American Mechanics. 10 folders (11 items). 1917-1951.

This series consists of records relating to the Junior Order United American Mechanics, including a minute book for the South Buffalo Council (2:5) and the proceedings of the State Councils of 1946 and 1951 (2:7-8). Other State Council information can be found in a 1940 bulletin announcing a special session to discuss the Junior Children's Home in Lexington (2:1) and correspondence from the state secretary regarding membership and death claims (2:3). The series also contains membership information in the form of: a pledge book recording members' commitment to faith, anti-immigration, and American patriotism, among other things (2:6); a

funeral benefit record book detailing instructions for enrollment and death claims (2:4); receipts and reports from officers (2:9-10); and a certificate granting a withdrawal card to member J.H. Abernathy of the Unity Council in Thomasville, North Carolina (2:2).

FOLDER LISTING

| <u>Series</u> | <u>Folder</u> | <u>Contents</u> | |
|---------------|---------------|--|--|
| 1 | 1 | Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union | -- Minute Book (1910-1912) |
| 2 | 1 | Junior Order United American Mechanics | -- Bulletin (State Council; February 1940) |
| | 2 | " | -- Certificate (1926) |
| | 3 | " | -- Correspondence (1944-1951) |
| | 4 | " | -- Funeral Benefit Record Book (1917-1936) |
| | 5 | " | -- Minute Book (1923-1931) |
| | 6 | " | -- Pledge Book (1917-1932) |
| | 7 | " | -- Proceedings (State Council; 1946) |
| | 8 | " | -- Proceedings (State Council; 1951) |
| | 9 | " | -- Receipt (1951) |
| | 10 | " | -- Report (1946) |