

This presentation explores one of Arizona's most controversial governors, Evan Mecham, and his relationship with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS). Serving as the 17th Governor of Arizona, Evan Mecham's time in office was tumultuous and riddled with controversy. From his political decisions as a Constitutionalist to his association with the LDS Church, Mecham made Arizonians uncomfortable and angry throughout his 15 months in office. These feelings peaked in late-1987 when he faced impeachment, a recall election, and a felony indictment. This presentation analyzes Mecham's history with the LDS Church to determine how the interplay of religion and politics affected his image and legacy as governor. It analyzes the various newspaper articles that focus on his political missteps and reveals what Arizonians thought of him through his papers. Together, these items create an image of the careful balance between religion and politics in the 1980s. This case study fills an extensive void in the history of Mecham's time as governor. There are few extensive publications on this controversial figure, and all that remains of his legacy are newspaper articles and boxes held at the Arizona State Archives. Although this presentation cannot fill that void, it does provide context for why he may have been minimized in Arizona's historical timeline and acknowledges the problems when religion, politics, and power are mixed.