



State of Tennessee
Department of State
Tennessee State Library and Archives

**William J. Burnette Collection of Ruoff Family Papers,
1845-1980 (bulk 1845-1880)**

COLLECTION SUMMARY

Creator:

Ruoff family

Inclusive Dates:

1845-1980, bulk 1845-1880

Scope & Content:

This collection contains 65 documents primarily related to James Frederick Ruoff of Munich, Germany, and Kingston and Chattanooga, Tennessee. Many are written in German and the container list identifies which ones. The documents in folders 5, 7, 15, 16, 17, and 19 have been transcribed and translated. It should be noted that all of the German language documents refer to James F. Ruoff as Friedrich Ruoff, and one letter is even addressed to "Friedrich Ruoff Jr." While it appears he did not change his name upon immigrating to the United States (his passport is signed "J. Friedr. Ruoff"), it does seem that he used his middle name in Germany and his first name after coming to the U. S. He also anglicized "Jakob Friedrich" to "James Frederick."

Two letters relate (one directly and one indirectly) to the 1848-49 Revolution in Germany. One letter, written to James, documents the fighting that broke out in Frankfurt after the National Assembly ratified the Malmö Treaty on September 16, 1848 (a pivotal moment in the 1848-49 Revolution). The treaty brought an end to the First Schleswig War, fought between Prussia and Denmark over control of the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. Under international pressure, Prussia yielded to most of Denmark's demands, including ceding control of the duchies to Denmark. By ratifying the treaty, the National Assembly enraged many Germans who felt that the duchies should be part of Germany. Street fighting broke out in Frankfurt, and public support of the National Assembly significantly eroded. As a result, the National Assembly eventually dissolved on May 31, 1849.

The second document (indirectly) related to the 1848-49 Revolution is a letter of recommendation for James F. Ruoff from the Munich Gymnastics Association. The gymnastics movement in Germany was started in 1811 by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn in response to the French occupation of German states during the Napoleonic Wars. The gymnastics associations (*Turnverein*) were intended to physically prepare German youth to defend the country and instill in them a sense of national pride. During this period, these gymnastics associations were as much political organizations as they were sports clubs, and many members actively took part in the revolution. The previously mentioned letter to James states, "The fighters were, as usual, workers and people from outside the city as well as many gymnasts." Given the associations' involvement in the revolution and that James was a founding member and longtime Secretary of the Munich Gymnastics Association, it is highly probable that he emigrated from Germany for political reasons.

Other items in the collection include James's Civil War discharge papers as a forage agent for the Quartermaster's Office in Kingston, Tennessee. Of political and civil rights interest are several receipts for payment of Chattanooga's poll tax. They document a dramatic increase in the tax from fifty cents in 1871 to two dollars in 1873.

Special thanks to Dr. Alfred Lutz at Middle Tennessee State University for his assistance in transcribing and translating some of the German language documents. For more information about the Revolution of 1848-49, see Jonathan Sperber's *Rhineland Radicals: The Democratic Movement and the Revolution of 1848-1849* (Princeton University Press, 1991).

Physical Description/Extent:

0.25 cubic feet

Accession/Record Group Number:

Ac. No. 2006-111

Language:

German and English

Permanent Location:

VIII-L-6

Repository:

Tennessee State Library and Archives, 403 Seventh Avenue North, Nashville, Tennessee, 37243-0312

Administrative/Biographical History

James Frederick Ruoff (ca. 1827-1881) immigrated to the United States after the failure of the 1848-49 Revolution in Germany. The documents within the collection suggest that his departure was probably for political reasons. He traveled from Neu-Ulm to Le Havre and from there sailed to New York City, arriving on May 28, 1849. In 1850, he settled in Kingston, Tennessee, where he operated a lumber mill. His father, Christoph F. Ruoff, also arrived from Germany that year with the rest of the family, and they settled in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

During the Civil War, James served as a forage agent for the Union Quartermaster's Office in Kingston, Tennessee. He was discharged from the position on January 25, 1865. His younger brother, Charles A. Ruoff (1840-1910), enlisted in the Union army and was mustered into Company B, 5th (East) Tennessee Volunteer Infantry Regiment on March 6, 1862. He was promoted to sergeant major on July 6, 1862.

After the Civil War, James moved with his family to Chattanooga. He had married Amanda Underwood (1841-1886) on April 19, 1859. Their oldest son, William F. Ruoff (1865-1927) worked for T. H. Payne, a Chattanooga publishing company, for 25 years.

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Index Terms**Personal Names:**

Ruoff, Charles A., ca. 1840-1910
Ruoff, James F., ca. 1827-1881

Ruoff, William F., 1865-1927

Corporate Names/Organizations/Government Bodies:

United States. Army. Tennessee Infantry Regiment, 5th (1862-1865)
Deutsche Nationalversammlung (1848-1849: Frankfurt am Main, Germany)

Subjects:

Germany -- History -- Revolution, 1848-1849
Germany -- History -- Revolution, 1848-1849 -- Personal narratives
Germany -- History -- Revolution, 1848-1849 -- Refugees
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

Geographic Names:

Frankfurt am Main (Germany) -- History
Hesse (Germany) -- History -- Revolution, 1848-1849

Document Types:

Clippings (information artifacts)
Letters of recommendation
Passports

Acquisition and Appraisal

Provenance and Acquisition:

The items in this collection were purchased at a court-ordered estate sale in May 2006 by Gary C. Jenkins, who donated them to the Tennessee State Library and Archives and requested the collection be named in honor of William J. Burnette, a descendant of the Ruoff family.

Processing and Administrative Information

Preferred Citation:

William J. Burnette Collection of Ruoff Family Papers, 1845-1980,
Tennessee State Library and Archives

Processing Information:

Processing completed by William M. Thomas in April 2012.

Electronic Location and Access:

<http://www.tn.gov/tsla/history/manuscripts/findingaids/2006-111.pdf>

CONTAINER LIST

Contents/Item Title	Date	Box	Folder
Clippings -- Ruoff Family History	1980	1	1
Correspondence -- Danhauser, F. S. [in German]	1850	1	2
Correspondence -- George L. Gillespie & Company	1850	1	3
Correspondence --Jacker, Max [in German]	1850	1	4
Correspondence -- Karl (Charles A. Ruoff?) [in German]		1	5
Correspondence -- Laruelle, Louis [in German]	1850	1	6
Correspondence -- Weczerzick [in German]	1848	1	7
Financial documents -- Invoice	1852	1	8
Financial documents -- Invoices [in German]		1	9
Financial documents -- Receipts	1850 - 1851	1	10
Financial documents -- Tax Receipts	1858 - 1868	1	11
Financial documents -- Tax Receipts	1870 - 1880	1	12
Legal documents -- Certificate of Naturalization	1855	1	13
Legal documents -- Estate Papers	1930, 1941	1	14
Legal documents -- Kingdom of Bavaria Passport [in German]	1849	1	15
Letters of recommendation -- Bolzman, Carl [in German]	1845	1	16
Letters of recommendation -- Munich Gymnastics Association [in German]	1849	1	17
Letters of recommendation -- Nutzinger [in German]	1845	1	18
Letters of recommendation -- Voelcker, Georg and P. E. Schneider [in German]	1847	1	19
Letters of recommendation -- Young, F.	1864	1	20
Military records -- Discharge Papers	1865	1	21