



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

**GOVERNOR JAMES D. PORTER**  
**(1828-1912)**  
**PAPERS**  
**1875-1879**

**GP 24**

*Processed by:*

Elbert Watson

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**MICROFILMED**

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The official papers of Governor James D. Porter (1875-1879) reflect the settled conditions returning to Tennessee following the Civil War and Reconstruction. Much of the correspondence deals with the political and economic conditions prevailing during the period, with many of the writers expressing their satisfaction over the ascendancy of the Democratic Party once again in Tennessee. Of particular interest, are the letters which appraised the disputed Hayes-Tilden presidential election of 1876, with one writer, Charles A. Smith of Henderson, Texas, offering a lengthy, well written analysis in 1877.

The topic evoking the most interest, however, was the great Yellow Fever epidemic which swept Tennessee and her sister states in the latter part of 1878. The correspondence, coming from places like Memphis, Chattanooga, Martin, Somerville, Grand Junction, etc. ranged from urgent pleas by mayors for physicians and medicinal supplies, to letters by ordinary citizens describing death and destruction heaped upon themselves and their communities. A typical telegram, sent to Porter by Humboldt mayor J. C. Hailey, on October 7, 1878, said "Our city is surrounded by yellow fever. The people are panic stricken and nowhere to go". W. H. Hardy, an attorney of Meridan, Mississippi, saw his life's savings depleted because of the fever, and offered to sell his treasured marble bust of President Andrew Jackson to the state of Tennessee.

A goodly portion of the Yellow fever correspondence emanating from Memphis concerned the death of the Honorable P.T. Scruggs, who, on August 30, 1878, had acknowledged to Porter receipt of his commission as Judge of the Criminal Court of that city. Scruggs' death within a month brought a flurry of applications and recommendations for the position.

M. H. Farris of Indianapolis, Indiana, saw a commercial aspect in the spreading epidemic and recommended a gentleman (Name not given) who had a theory for combating the fever. "He proposes," Farris wrote, to work on those who have not been smitten with the plague and fortify their system against an attack (sic) of the disease with a preparation he can make by the barred in a few minutes time".

One letter which deserves special attention was the one written by Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard on April 23, 1875, in reply to an invitation extended by Porter to attend a "grand reunion of all Soldiers and Sailors of the United States, to be held at Chicago May 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 14<sup>th</sup>, 1875". Beauregard took the occasion to defend himself against remarks made by a certain General Frank Sherman, who objected to the invitation being sent to a man (Beauregard) who had said he was in favor of shooting all prisoners taken under the American flag". In his lengthy missive, Beauregard recalled different engagements such as the First Manassas, Shiloh, Charleston, and Drury's Bluff where he treated his prisoners with "humanity and proper consideration".

Immigration into Tennessee from other states and countries constituted another important topic covered in the correspondence. Several writers, such as H. Cameron Richardson of London, England, freely offered their advice as to how Tennessee could divert and influence foreign immigration into the state.

Correspondence of a more incidental nature gives an insight into what Tennesseans were thinking and doing during this period. One letter, for instance, came from Robert H. Blair of Pigeon Forge, Sevier County, telling of his discovery of a remedy for hog cholera.

If given in the first stage of the cholera, the remedy was said to be effective within 25 to 90 minutes. Willing to part with his discovery, Blair requested that the state "donate to me a suitable sum of money to pay me for my trouble and reward me for my discovery". One interesting letter from Thomas C. Teasdale on May 31, 1877, told of a proposal to select Confederate General Stephen D. Lee as President of East Tennessee University.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

### **Governor James Davis Porter**

- 1828, December 7      Born at Paris, Tennessee. Parents were Dr. Thomas Kennedy Porter, and Geraldine Horton Porter.
- 1846                      Graduated from the University of Nashville.
- 1847-1851               Studied law in the office of a capable Paris lawyer, John H. Dunlap.
- 1859                      Represented Henry, Carroll, Gibson and Madison counties in the Thirty-Third General Assembly in the House.
- 1851, June 17           Married Susan Dunlap, daughter of his preceptor.
- 1861                      Porter was attached to the staff of General Benjamin F. Cheatham as a Lieutenant Colonel. He participated in the battle of Shiloh, Chickamauga, Franklin and Nashville.
- 1865                      At the close of the war. Porter returned to his law practice in Paris.
- 1869                      Elected Speaker of the Senate.
- 1870                      Elected Judge of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit.
- 1875, January 18       Elected governor of Tennessee.
- 1877, February 13      Re-elected governor of Tennessee.
- 1879                      After his retirement from the gubernatorial chair, he was elected President of the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway.
- 1885                      Appointed First Assistant Secretary of State of the United States by President Grover Cleveland.
- 1893                      Appointed by President Cleveland as Minister to Chile.

1901

Elected President of George Peabody College and Chancellor of the University of Nashville.

1912 May 18

Died at his home in Paris, Tennessee. Buried in the family burial lot in the City Cemetery.

## CONTAINER LIST

### Microfilm Roll #1

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#### BOX 1

1. Correspondence – Governor James D. Porter 1875-1876-1877-1878
2. Correspondence – General-Adams-Butler 1875
3. Correspondence – General-Calahan-Dunlap 1875
4. Correspondence – General-Earnest-Groome 1875
5. Correspondence – General-Hall-Ingersol 1875
6. Correspondence – General-Jackson-Lurton 1875

#### BOX 2

1. Correspondence – General-MacCabe-Murray 1875
2. Correspondence – General-Nall-Ryan 1875
3. Correspondence – General-Samel-Turner 1875
4. Correspondence – General-Vallians-Young 1875
5. Correspondence – General-Abernathy-Curtis 1876

### Microfilm Roll #2

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#### BOX 3

1. Correspondence – General-Allen-Fulkerson 1876
2. Correspondence – General-Gailand- Hurt 1876
3. Correspondence – General-Jenp-Murphey 1876
4. Correspondence – General-Nicholson-Stratton 1876
5. Correspondence – General-Taylor-Yorst 1876
6. Correspondence – General-Adams-Bryant 1877
7. Correspondence – General-Cain-Curroh 1877
8. Correspondence – General-Dahlgren-Ewing 1877

#### BOX 4

1. Correspondence – General-Fare-Gregory 1877
2. Correspondence – General-Hacker-Hurt 1877
3. Correspondence – General-Kirby-King 1877
4. Correspondence – General-Lanesselen-McPaul 1877
5. Correspondence – General-Menees-Myers 1877

**Microfilm Roll #3**

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**BOX 5**

1. Correspondence – General-Neal-Quarles 1877
2. Correspondence – General-Ray-Rushing 1877
3. Correspondence – General-Sample-Tyler 1877
4. Correspondence – General-Vance-Young 1877
5. Correspondence – General-Adams-Bwaddus 1878
6. Correspondence – General-Caldwell-Cypert 1878

**BOX 6**

1. Correspondence – General-Daniel-Ewing 1878
2. Correspondence – General-Fairbanks-Guffey 1878
3. Correspondence – General-Hacker-Hunt 1878
4. Correspondence – General-Ingram-Knight 1878

**Microfilm Roll #4**

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5. Correspondence – General-Lafitte-Lyon 1878
6. Correspondence – General-MacCabe-Oakley 1878

**BOX 7**

1. Correspondence – General-Neely-Rutherford 1878
2. Correspondence – General-Saffanans-Sykes 1878
3. Correspondence – General-Taggart-Vanderbilt 1878
4. Correspondence – General-Wade-Yeanon 1878

**BOX 8**

1. Correspondence – General-Corkery-Shearon 1879
2. Miscellaneous Correspondence – Arnell-Webb 1874-1875-1876
3. Miscellaneous Correspondence – Allen-Wilson 1877-1878
4. Miscellaneous Material 1875-1876
5. Miscellaneous Material 1877-1878

**Microfilm Roll #5**

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**BOX 9**

1. Letter Press Book to September 1877  
(Includes some for Governor Brown)
2. Letter Press Book 1878-1879

**BOX 10**

1. Petitions for Pardons – Adk-Dod 1875
2. Petitions for Pardons – Dos-Hug 1875

**Microfilm Roll #6**

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**BOX 11**

1. Petitions for Pardons – Jon-Rob 1875
2. Petitions for Pardons – Rod-You 1875
3. Petitions for Pardons – All-Fry 1876

**BOX 12**

1. Petitions for Pardons – Gai-Hug 1876

**Microfilm Roll #7**

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2. Petitions for Pardons – Kel-Zac 1876
3. Petitions for Pardons – Als-Gre 1877

**Microfilm Roll #8**

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**BOX 13**

1. Petitions for Pardons – Ham-Nor 1877
2. Petitions for Pardons – Osl-Wri 1877

**Microfilm Roll #9**

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**BOX 14**

1. Petitions for Pardons – Adk-Fri 1878
2. Petitions for Pardons – Gat-Mor 1878
3. Petitions for Pardons – Oak-You 1878

**BOX 15**

1. Petitions for Pardons – Bad-Wyr 1879
2. Pardons and Commutations – Ayr-San 1875
3. Pardons and Commutations – Cat-Will 1876

**Microfilm Roll #10**

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4. Pardons and Commutations – And-Ren 1877
5. Pardons and Commutations – App-Wri 1878
6. Pardons and Commutations – All-You 1879
7. “Personnel Notations” Re: Pardons – Ale-You
8. Prosecutions – State – App-Woo

**BOX 16**

1. Requests for Extradition – Adk-Wor 1875

**Microfilm Roll #11**

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2. Requests for Extradition – Abe-Whi 1876

**BOX 17**

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|---------------------------------------|------|
| 1. Requests for Extradition – Ang-Wri | 1877 |
| 2. Requests for Extradition – Adl-Zen | 1878 |
| 3. Requests for Extradition – Bla-Tay | 1879 |

**BOX 18**

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|---------------------|-----------|
| 1. Reward – Aus-Wre | 1875-1879 |
|---------------------|-----------|

## NAME INDEX

This index contains names of persons holding influential positions during the period. In some instances, however, correspondence is included because the content is important enough to warrant attention in the index. The figures in the parentheses immediately following each name denote the total number of letters in the folder from that person. The identification of the writer and the site from where the letters were written are included whenever possible.

### **Box 1, Folder 2, 1875**

W. Matt Brown (1) Warden, Tennessee Penitentiary, Nashville.

### **Box 1, Folder 3, 1875**

A. J. Caldwell (1) Position unknown, Nashville. Mr. Caldwell called the governor's attention to certain buildings which had been erected by unauthorized parties on the Hermitage property.

Robert L. Carouthers (3) former United States Congressman, Lebanon.

B. F. Cheatham (1) former Confederate General, Beech Grove, Tennessee.

A. S. Colyar (4) President Tennessee Coal & Railroad Co., Nashville.

A. S. Correy (1) County Superintendent of Schools, Gibson County, Trenton, Tenn.

### **Box 1, Folder 4, 1875**

Hamilton Fish (4), Secretary of State, Washington D.C.

### **Box 1, Folder 5, 1875**

Isham G. Harris (3) former governor of Tennessee, Memphis.

J. B. Heiskell (6) Attorney General, Memphis.

### **Box 2, Folder 1, 1875**

William P. Martin (3) Position unknown, Columbia, Tennessee.

William Maxwell (2) Master, State Grange of Tennessee, Nashville.

### **Box 2, Folder 2, 1875**

Gideon J Pillow (1), Merchant, Memphis.

### **Box 2, Folder 3, 1875**

James M Smith (3), Governor of Georgia, Atlanta.

### **Box 2, Folder 4, 1875**

Samuel P. Walker (1), Chancellor, Second Chancery Court of Shelby County.

**Box 2, Folder 5, 1876**

Phil R. Athy (1), Chief of Police, Memphis.

**Box 3, Folder 2, 1876**

J. B. Heiskell (2), Attorney General, Memphis.

**Box 3, Folder 3, 1876**

Andrew Johnson (1), Son of the former President of the U.S., Greenville, Tenn.  
William P. Martin (5), Position unknown, Columbia.

**Box 3, Folder 4, 1876**

J.G.M. Ramsey (1), Tennessee author, Knoxville.  
James M. Smith (1), Governor of Georgia, Atlanta.  
J M Stone (1), Governor of Mississippi, Jackson, Mississippi.

**Box 3, Folder 7, 1877**

Moses H. Cliff (1), United States Congressman, Chattanooga.  
M. Cullom (2), Governor of Illinois, Springfield, Illinois.

**Box 3, Folder 8, 1877**

H. Erni (1), U.S. Consul to Switzerland, Basle, Switzerland.

**Box 4, Folder 1, 1877**

Hamilton Fish (2), Secretary of State, Washington D.C.

**Box 4, Folder 2, 1877**

Isham G. Harris (1), Former governor of Tennessee, Memphis.

**Box 4, Folder 4, 1877**

Albert S. Marks (2), Former governor of Tennessee, Winchester.

**Box 4, Folder 5, 1877**

Rev. J. B. McFerrin (1), Well known Methodist minister, Nashville.

**Box 5, Folder 1, 1877**

G. W. Norton (5), President Southern Bank Kentucky, Louisville.

**Box 5, Folder 6, 1878**

B. F. Cheatham (1), Confederate General, Nashville.  
Moses H. Clift (1), United States Congressman, Chattanooga.  
Alfred H. Colquhoun (3), Governor of Georgia, Atlanta.  
B. A. Crawford (5), Chairman, Relief Committee, Martin.

**Box 6, Folder 1, 1878**

William B. Dortch (2), Somerville, Tennessee.

**Box 6, Folder 2, 1878**

S. Bassett French (5), Secretary, Robert E. Lee.  
Monument Association, Richmond, Virginia

**Box 6, Folder 3, 1878**

Isham G. Harris (2), former governor of Tennessee, Bell Plain, Texas.  
J. B. Heiskell (3), Attorney General, Memphis.  
J. T. Hill (5), Secretary, Relief Committee, Chattanooga.  
George S. Houston (1), Governor of Alabama, Montgomery.  
Thomas W. Humes (6), President East Tennessee University, Knoxville.

**Box 6, Folder 5, 1878**

David Lipscomb (1) Publisher, Gospel Advocate, Nashville.

**Box 6, Folder 6, 1878**

R. W. Mitchell (9), Medical Director during Yellow Fever epidemic, Memphis.

**Box 7, Folder 1, 1878**

C. T. Quintard (1), Episcopal Bishop of Tennessee, Chattanooga.