



State of Tennessee
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Tennessee State Library and Archives
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**RUSKIN COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION
RECORDS
1896-1963**

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INTRODUCTION

The Ruskin Cooperative Association Papers (1896-1963) contain material relating to the Ruskin Cooperative Association Colony, which existed in Tennessee, and later Georgia, from 1894-1901. They were given to the Manuscript Division by Mrs. Grace Reaves of Patagonia, Arizona, a daughter of one of the Ruskin colonists, and Mrs. J. Taylor Wilkerson of Delores, Colorado. An addition to the papers was made by Dr. Mary Baxter Cook, Dickson, Tennessee.

The materials in this collection measure .42 cubic feet. There are no restrictions on the materials.

Literary rights to the unpublished writings in these papers have been dedicated to the public. Single photocopies of unpublished writings in the Ruskin Cooperative Association Records may be made for purposes of scholarly research.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

Until recent years, there has been little material available on the day by day affairs of the Ruskin Cooperative Association Colony, which was established in Dickson County, Tennessee, in 1894, by the notable American Socialist, Julius Augustus Wayland. Gradually, however, some writings in the form of reminiscences and original manuscripts of the colonists have been released, of which the items contained in this collection are a part.

The Ruskin Cooperative Association was one of the numerous Socialistic colonies which sprang up in various sections of the nation during the unsettled post-Civil War period. While publishing *The Coming Nation* at Greensburg, Indiana, Wayland established the Utopian Colony at Ruskin, Tennessee. It was not long, however, until certain internal problems developed, and Wayland himself departed in 1895. The colony rocked along until 1899, when a lawsuit resulted in its dissolution. Most of the members pooled their assets and moved their belongings to Ware County, Georgia, where they continued communal living for two more years, after which time the social experiment completely collapsed.

The photographs of the colonists and scenes in Tennessee and Georgia are interesting and valuable. One unsigned letter, written April 7, 1901, tells of the closing of the Ruskin, Georgia, colony, which the writer described as:

“A final wind up of shame and disgrace. Some few have by one way and another and by sickness frozen the most and more desirable [sic] portion out and then with a high handed cussidness used the C[hristian] N[ation] as a means of publishing to their subscribers this false shameful [sic] and disgraceful account of things.”

There are two letters written in 1961 by Earl Miller, a former treasurer of the colony. In these he recalls some of the events of those earlier years. A seven page, typewritten manuscript written by Theodore McDill in 1932, recounts some humorous and tragic phases of the Tennessee period of Ruskin Colony's history.

An addition was made to these papers containing briefs of the court cases, some accounts, the constitution and bylaws, the act of incorporation of the association, stock certificates, lists of land claims, and some labor certificates.

There is an article on the Ruskin Colony in the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 17, March 1958, pp. 45-69

CONTAINER LIST

Box 1

1. Accounts – 1898-1899
2. Claims and lists of stockholders
3. Constitution and bylaws (agreement plan moved to oversize folder)
4. Correspondence – author unknown; Brown - Weiniers
5. Labor certificates and lists of stockholders; sketch of T. McDill
6. Legal documents – court cases
7. Newspapers - moved to oversize folder
8. Photographs
9. Poems and Articles by Eva Gordon

Oversize folder

1. Newspapers – *The Coming Nation*, 1898; *The Ruskin Bugle*, April 1906 (1 issue of each)
2. Agreement Plan

NAME INDEX

This is a name index of the correspondence only in the Ruskin Cooperative Association Records Collection, together with the dates of the letters and information regarding their contents. The figures in parentheses denote the number of letters, if more than one. The last numbers refer to the box and folder in which the material is to be found.

Author Unknown, 1901
Brown, C.A., 1899
Conard and Jones Company, 1899
Cook, W.L., 1902
Eskridge, W.A., 1900
Flower, E.G., 1899
Jones, Frank, 1898
McDill, H.C. (2), 1899
Malny, P.H., 1899
Miller, Earl (2), 1961
Morgan, William J. (3), 1899-1901
Reaves, Grace, 1963
Sinclair, Mrs. W.M., 1899
Taylor, C.G., 1917
Weiniers, William, 1899