



State of Tennessee
Department of State
Tennessee State Library and Archives

RUGBY PAPERS
1826-1942, bulk 1872-1899

COLLECTION SUMMARY

Inclusive Dates:

1826-1942, bulk 1872-1899

Scope & Content:

The Rugby Papers contain accounts of the Board of Aid to Land Ownership; geological reports; legal records; land and survey records; library records; manufacturing records; lawn tennis club records; literary and drama club records; church records; social club papers; maps; writings and speeches of Thomas Hughes; photographs; and correspondence of all the principals involved in this immigration venture.

The largest portion of the collection is composed of correspondence which has been separated into the incoming and outgoing letters of Thomas Hughes (1823-1896), President of the English Branch of the Board of Aid to Land Ownership; William Hastings Hughes, brother of Thomas Hughes; Franklin Wesley Smith, President of the American Branch of the Board of Aid to Land Ownership; Albert M. Knight, Secretary of the American Branch; and Robert Walton (1841-1907), General Manager of the colony from 1882 to 1907. William T. Walton (1877-1958) succeeded his father as General Manager, and his outgoing correspondence is included. All correspondence is arranged alphabetically by author.

The records of the Hughes Library contain accounts, lists of books received, book advertisements, the library charter issued in 1883 by the State of Tennessee, documents concerning the building of the library, librarians' reports, and the catalog as devised by Eduard Bertz.

There are land records composed of grants, surveys, purchases, rentals, reports on timber and mineral resources, agreements, leases, tax records, court cases, and maps. The records of the Tabard Inn (named for the old inn in Southwark, England (the public house where the pilgrims in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* first met), include accounts, building specifications, advertisements, guest lists, history, legal papers, clippings, and contracts. The collection also contains

minutes of the Lawn Tennis Club for the years 1880-1887, minutes of the Rugby Social Club with some of its papers for the years 1884-1887, records of board meetings, an account book, and a letterbook of the Rugby Canning Company. The records of Christ Church Episcopal include building specifications; a description; photographs; correspondence of the Reverend Joseph Blacklock; and the church minute book, 1880-1890. There are a number of letterbooks and account books among the papers. Several biographical sketches, writings, photographs, speeches, pencil sketches of the buildings, and autographs of the original colonists make up the remainder of the collection.

Physical Description/Extent:

7.0 cubic feet

Accession/Record Group Number:

Ac. Nos. 145; 1661; 1740; 67-89; 67-156; 68-081; 68-178

Language:

English

Permanent Location:

VI-J-1-2, Mf. 0253

Repository:

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

Administrative/Biographical History

The utopian colony at Rugby was founded in 1880 by British author and social reformer Thomas Hughes, backed by a consortium of wealthy Englishmen and Boston capitalists. The settlement was established on the Cumberland Plateau in Morgan and Scott counties in Tennessee, where the investors owned 75,000 acres. Hughes envisioned his new community as a place where those who wished could build a strong agricultural society through cooperative enterprise while maintaining a cultured, Christian lifestyle, free of the rigid class distinctions that prevailed in Britain. The idea for the colony grew out of Hughes's concern for the younger sons of landed British families. Under the custom of primogeniture, the eldest son usually inherited the entire estate, leaving the younger sons with only a few socially acceptable employment options. In America, Hughes believed, these young men's energies and talents could be directed toward community building through agriculture. By 1884, Hughes's vision seemed bent on becoming a thriving reality. An English agriculturalist had been engaged to help train new colonists. Some 70 Victorian buildings had been constructed on the town site, and around 450 residents

enjoyed the rustic yet culturally refined atmosphere. Literary societies and drama clubs were established. Lawn tennis grounds were laid out and used frequently. Colonists and visitors enjoyed rugby football, horseback riding, croquet, and swimming in the clear flowing rivers surrounding the town site. The grand Tabard Inn, named for the public house in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, soon became the social center of the colony. The Thomas Hughes Public Library, with thousands of volumes donated by admirers and publishers, was the pride of the colony. Rugby entrepreneurs operated general stores, stables, boarding houses, a sawmill, a drug store, a dairy, and a butcher shop. The community also published a weekly newspaper, *The Rugbeian*. In 1881, a typhoid epidemic claimed seven lives. Financial troubles, land title problems, and unusually severe winters gradually caused Rugby's once lively society to crumble. The hardest blow came when the Tabard Inn burned in 1884, marking the colony's final decline. The founder's aged mother Margaret Hughes, his brother Hastings, and niece Emily, who lived in Rugby during its early years, visited less frequently. Thomas Hughes poured in more than \$75,000 of his own money hoping to save the settlement. In an 1892 letter, he wrote "that good seed was sewn when Rugby was founded..." Hughes died of heart failure on March 22, 1896, in Brighton, England. By 1900, many of the original colonists had left, most for other parts of America. Though Rugby declined, it was never fully deserted. Individual residents and some children of the original colonists struggled over many decades to keep its heritage alive. In 1966, preservationists founded Historic Rugby, a nonprofit group dedicated to restoring and maintaining the community's surviving historic structures. In 1972, Rugby was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Source: <http://www.historicrugby.org/rugby-colony-history.php>

Organization/Arrangement of Materials

Collection is arranged alphabetically by document type and then chronologically.

Conditions of Access and Use

Restrictions on Access:

No restrictions

Restrictions on Use and Reproduction:

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for determining the existence of such instances and for obtaining any other permissions and paying associated fees that may be necessary for the intended use.

Index Terms

Personal Names:

Hughes, Thomas, 1822-1896
Hughes, William Hastings, 1833-1909
Kemp, Charles P., d. 1892
Knight, Albert M., fl. 1879-1881
Smith, Franklin Wesley, 1826-1911
Walton, Robert, 1841-1907
Walton, William T., 1877-1958

Corporate Names/Organizations/Government Bodies:

Hughes Public Library (Rugby, Tenn.)
Tabard Inn (Rugby, Tenn.)

Subjects:

Agriculture -- Tennessee -- 19th century
Communal living -- Tennessee -- 19th century
Utopian socialism -- History -- 19th century

Geographic Names:

Rugby (Tenn.) -- History -- 19th century -- Sources

Document Types:

Accounts
Biographies
Catalogs
Church records
Clippings (information artifacts)
Correspondence
Insurance records
Invitations
Floor plans
Land grants

Land surveys
Legal documents
Lists (documents)
Maps
Minutes
Photographs
Programs
Speeches

Acquisition and Appraisal

Provenance and Acquisition:

The collection was donated by Mr. and Mrs. W. T. Walton, of Rugby, Tennessee. Mr. Walton was the only survivor of the original colony at the time the papers were deposited in 1958. Both Mr. and Mrs. Walton have since deceased. An addition to the collection was made by Mr. Irving Martin of Rugby, Tennessee, through the agency of Dr. Sam Smith. The last addition, composed of photocopies of the original material, was loaned for copying by the Rugby Restoration Association through the agency of Mr. Oscar Martin of Gallatin and Rugby, Tennessee.

Processing and Administrative Information

Preferred Citation:

Rugby Papers, 1826-1942, Tennessee State Library and Archives

Processing Information:

The collection was organized and arranged by Gregory Poole in 2010, and completed by Kimberly Mills in July 2012.

Existence and Location of Originals:

The original records which had been housed at TSLA were returned to the Rugby Restoration Association. The collection is now composed of photocopies, microfilms, and some originals in cases where there were duplicates.

Electronic Location and Access:

<http://www.tn.gov/tsla/history/manuscripts/findingaids/145+.pdf>

CONTAINER LIST

Contents/Item Title	Date	Box	Folder
Account Book	1895-1912	1	1
Accounts	1880-1909	1	2
Accounts -- Rugby Colony	1880-1899	1	3
Accounts -- Walton, Robert	1887-1903	1	4
Associations & Clubs	1873-1889	1	5
Autographs & Lists -- Early Colonists at Rugby	1879-1881	1	6
Biographical Notes -- Colonists at Rugby	undated	1	7
Biographical Sketch -- Hughes, Thomas	1880-1896	1	8
Biographical Sketch -- Kemp, Charles P.	1892	1	9
Building Specifications	1878	1	10
Church Records -- Christ Church	1887-1889	1	11
Church Records -- Christ Church -- Minute Book	1880-1890	1	12
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Correspondence, Hughes, Thomas, Incoming -- Kellogg – Pugh	1880-1881	1	17
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Correspondence, Hughes, William H., Incoming -- Forbes – Hill	1880-1882	2	7
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Correspondence, Hughes, William H., Incoming -- Koenitzer – Oliver	1880-1881	2	9
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Correspondence, Hughes, William H., Incoming -- Temple – Wooten	1880-1882	2	13
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Correspondence, Smith, Franklin W., Incoming -- Adams – Agnes	1879	3	1
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Correspondence, Smith, Franklin W., Incoming -- Dickinson – Edwards	1878-1879	3	8
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Correspondence, Walton, Robert, Incoming -- Buttrick – Cory	1890-1892	4	6
Correspondence, Walton, Robert, Incoming -- Culliman – Ely	1890-1892	4	7
Correspondence, Walton, Robert, Incoming -- England – Gailor	1879-1892	4	8
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Correspondence, Walton, Robert, Incoming -- Gale, George	1904-1905	5	1
Correspondence, Walton, Robert, Incoming -- Gale, George	1906	5	2
Correspondence, Walton, Robert, Incoming -- Gates – Hughes	1889-1892	5	3
Correspondence, Walton, Robert, Incoming -- Hughtt – Kennedy	1891-1893	5	4
Correspondence, Walton, Robert, Incoming -- Kimber, Alfred – Kimber, Charles D.	1887-1892	5	5
Correspondence, Walton, Robert, Incoming -- Kimber, Henry	1885-1888	5	6
Correspondence, Walton, Robert, Incoming -- Kimber, Henry	1889-1890	5	7
Correspondence, Walton, Robert, Incoming -- Kimber, Henry	1891	5	8
Correspondence, Walton, Robert, Incoming -- Kimber, Henry	1892-1904	5	9
Correspondence, Walton, Robert, Incoming -- Kitchen – Nash	1885-1897	6	1
Correspondence, Walton, Robert, Incoming -- Nave – Patton	1890-1892	6	2
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Correspondence, Walton, Robert, Incoming -- Robbins – Schenck	1885-1897	6	4
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Correspondence, Walton, Robert, Incoming -- Weller – Wellman	1892-1897	6	6
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Correspondence, Walton, Robert, Incoming -- Wester – Young, G. W.	1891-1892	6	8
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Library -- Hughes Public Library -- Catalogue of Public Documents	undated	10	2
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Library -- Hughes Public Library -- Catalogue of Social and Political Science	undated	10	4
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