

A Guide to the William Henry Ruffner Papers, 1848-1907

William Henry Ruffner Papers, 1848-1907
1848-1907

A Collection in the Library of Virginia 24814
Library of Virginia
2002

History

Processed by: Description Services Staff
Funding: Web version of the finding aid funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Title Statement

A Guide to the William Henry Ruffner Papers, 1848-1907

Subtitle: Ruffner, William Henry, 1848-1907, Papers of

Collection: 24814

Author: Description Services Staff

Sponsor: Web version of the finding aid funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Publication Statement

File size: ca. 32 KB

Date: © 2002 By the Library of Virginia.

Publisher: Library of Virginia

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from paper and MARC record. Created by Jay Gaidmore, 29 July 2002

Language Usage: Description is in English

Revision Description

Feb 14, 2004 PUBLIC "-//Library of Virginia//TEXT (US::Vi::vi00164::A Guide to the William Henry Ruffner Papers, 1848-1907)//EN" "vi00164.xml" converted from EAD 1.0 to 2002 by v1to02.xsl (sy2003-10-15).

Feb 27, 2004 converted to conform to eadVIVA.dtd by vivastrict.xsl

2014-01-08 Converted to schema conforming EAD by dtd2schema.vh.xsl.

Descriptive Summary

Accession number

24814

Language

English

Physical Characteristics

0.45 cubic feet (102 items and 1 volume); negative photostats.

Physical Location

Personal papers collection. Acc. 24814.

Repository

Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

Lent for copying by Robert F. Campbell, through Charles W. Dabney, Winter Park, Florida, 26 January 1932.

Preferred Citation

William Henry Ruffner Papers, 1848-1907. Accession 24814, Personal papers collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Biographical/Historical Information

William Henry Ruffner was born 11 February 1824 in Lexington, Virginia, to Henry Ruffner (1790-1861) and Sarah Montgomery Lyle Ruffner (1787-1849). He graduated from Washington College in Lexington in 1842 and returned to receive his MA in 1845. Ruffner attended Union Theological Seminary in Hampden-Sidney, Virginia from 1845 to 1846 and attended Princeton Theological Seminary from 1846 to 1847. He was ordained a Presbyterian minister 14 January 1852 and became minister of Seventh Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. After resigning for health reasons in 1853, Ruffner returned to Virginia and became a successful farmer. An antislavery advocate and Unionist before the Civil War, Ruffner adhered to the Southern cause after Abraham Lincoln called for troops in response to the firing upon Fort Sumter. After the Civil War, Ruffner became an advocate of public education and was elected the first superintendent for public instruction 2 March 1870. He served until 1882, when turned out of office by the Readjuster party. Ruffner served as a trustee of Washington College and Washington and Lee University from 1865 to 1876. After leaving the superintendent post, Ruffner served as president of the Normal School in Farmville, Virginia, from 1884 to 1887. He then became a surveyor and geologist for the next several years. Ruffner wrote on education and theology. He married Harriet Ann Gray 3 September 1850 and they had four children. Ruffner died in Asheville, North Carolina, 24 November 1908.

Scope and Content Information

Papers, 1848-1907 (bulk 1866-1907), of William Henry Ruffner (1824-1908) of Lexington, Virginia, consisting of abstracts, articles, clippings, legislative bills, biographies, circular letters, diaries, letters, lists, minutes, notes, receipts, and testimonials regarding education in Virginia. Of interest are testimonials for William Henry Ruffner to be Virginia's first superintendent of public instruction, correspondence concerning his plans for education in Virginia, and exchange of ideas with other educators. Also contains notes on the history of education in Virginia. There is a list of teachers in antebellum Virginia. Collection also contains information on John Chavis (ca. 1775-1838), a free black Presbyterian minister in the early 1800s and an article on Jack Neal, a slave. Two letters of interest are: a) 23 February 1853 from Anne S. Rice to Henry Ruffner (1790-1861) about her slaves and the American Colonization Society; and b) 9 May 1900, from Laura A. Holland to William Henry Ruffner about Booker T. Washington. Collection also contains a description of a trip to the Northern Neck of Virginia, and William Henry Ruffner's diary, 1870-1907, describing his travels around the state of Virginia. Also of interest are letters from Stonewall Jackson's (1824-1863) sister-in-law Margaret Junkin Preston (1820-1897) and from Jackson's second wife Mary Anna Morrison Jackson (1831-1915).

Contents List

**1: Minutes of Board of Trustees of Washington College,
Lexington, Virginia, 21 June 1848**

Folder 1

Extent 2 p.

**2: Letter. Henry Ruffner, Louisville, to Mrs. George E. Dabney,
Lexington, Virginia, 29 May 1849**

Folder 1

Extent 4 p.

**3: Letter. Anne S. Rice, [Mrs. John Holt Rice], Rice Hill, to
[Henry Ruffner?], 23 February 1853**

Folder 1

Extent 4 p.

**4: Letter. W. H. Ruffner, Winchester, Virginia, to Mrs. W. H.
Ruffner, 7 July 1861**

Folder 1

Extent 6 p.

**5: Letter. James M. Brown, Ka. C. H., to W. H. Ruffner, 9 July
1861**

Folder 1

Extent 4 p.

**6: Letter. Henry Ruffner, Kanawha Salines, to daughter Julia, 7
May 1861**

Folder 1

Extent 2 p.

**7: Letter. W[illiam] H. McGuffey, University of Virginia, to Wm.
Henry Ruffner, 21 May 1866**

Folder 2

Extent 2 p.

**8: Letter. Francis H. Smith, Virginia Military Institute, to W. H.
Ruffner, Lexington, Virginia, 22 January 1867**

Folder 2

Extent 2 p.

**9: Letter. Joseph Henry, Smithsonian Institute, to W. H.
Ruffner, Lexington, Virginia, 4 June 1869**

Folder 2

Extent 3 p.

**10: Recommendation to Virginia State Legislature for W. H.
Ruffner to be made superintendent of Public Instruction**

Folder 2

Abstract Printed copy of this is entitled "Testimonials of W. H. Ruffner, Lexington, Virginia."

11: Testimonials of W. H. Ruffner by S. Maupin, Judge Egbert R. Watson, Hon. John B. Baldwin

Folder 2

Abstract Only the first signature on each testimony is given.

12: Letter. A. Leyburn, Elmwood, to R. E. Lee, Lexington, Virginia, 5 February 1870

Folder 2

Extent 1 p., printed.

12a: Letter. General R. E. Lee, Lexington, Virginia, to A. Leyburn, Elmwood, 5 February 1870

Folder 2

Abstract This letter is the reply to Item 12

Extent 1 p., printed.

13: Letter. B[enjamin] M. Smith, Union Theological Seminary, Hampden-Sydney, to Col. William McLaughlin, House of Delegates, Richmond, Virginia, 9 February 1870

Folder 2

Extent 2 p.

14: Letter. W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, to Mrs. W. H. Ruffner, 2 March 1870

Folder 2

Extent 1 p.

15: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 25 March 1870

Folder 2

Extent 8 p.

16: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Lexington, Virginia, 9 April 1870

Folder 2

Extent 4 p.

17: Letter. W. H. Ruffner, University of Virginia, to Mrs. W. H. Ruffner, 24 April 1870

Folder 2

Extent 4 p.

18: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 2 May 1870

Folder 2

Extent 6 p.

19: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 3 May 1870

Folder 2

Extent 8 p.

20: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 9 May 1870

Folder 2

Extent 3 p.

21: Letter. W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, to daughter Ann, 13 May 1870

Folder 2

Extent 2 p.

22: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 21 May 1870

Folder 2

Extent 4 p.

23: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 28 May 1870

Folder 2

Extent 7 p.

24: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 29 May 1870

Folder 2

Extent 2 p.

25: Letter. W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, to Misses Ruffner, 29 May 1870

Folder 2

Extent 4 p.

26: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 8 July 1870

Folder 2

Extent 7 p.

27: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Lexington, Virginia, 26 August 1870

Folder 2

Extent 4 p.

28: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Lexington, Virginia, 7 September 1870

Folder 2

Extent 4 p.

29: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 15 September 1870

Folder 2

Extent 4 p.

30: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 14 October 1870

Folder 2

Extent 7 p.

31: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 19 October 1870

Folder 2

Extent 7 p.

32: Letter. B[arnas] Sears, Staunton, to W. H. Ruffner, 16 November 1870

Folder 2

Extent 3 p.

33: Letter. B[arnas] Sears, Staunton, to W. H. Ruffner, 17 November 1870

Folder 2

Extent 2 p.

34: Letter. Francis H. Smith, Virginia Military Institute, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 13 January 1871

Folder 3

Extent 1 p.

35: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 18 February 1872

Folder 3

Extent 5 p.

36: Letter. W[illiam] H. McGuffey, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, 28 February 1872

Folder 3

Extent 2 p.

37: Letter. B[arnas] Sears, Staunton, Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, 5 August 1872

Folder 3

Extent 4 p.

38: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 8 August 1872

Folder 3

Extent 5 p.

39: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 27 December 1872

Folder 3

Extent 3 p.

40: Letter. Judge Ro[bert] W. Hughes, Abingdon, Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, 24 April 1873

Folder 3

Extent 10 p.

41: Letter. Edward S. Joynes, Lexington, Virginia, to [W. H. Ruffner], 26 April 1873

Folder 3

Extent 2 p.

42: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 5 May 1873

Folder 3

Extent 2 p.

43: Letter. Hugh Blair Grigsby, Charlotte Court House, Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 8 May 1873

Folder 3

Extent 2 p.

44: Letter. B[arnas] Sears, Richmond, Virginia, to General [___] Anderson, 5 December 1873

Folder 3

Extent 4 p.

45: Letter. George F. Hoar, Washington, to W. H. Ruffner, 3 January 1874

Folder 3

Extent 2 p.

46: Letter. John Eaton, Washington, to W. H. Ruffner, 6 January 1874

Folder 3

Extent 2 p.

47: Letter. B[arnas] Sears, Staunton, Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, 8 January 1874

Folder 3

Extent 2 p.

48: Letter. Hugh Blair Grigsby, Charlotte Court House, Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 16 February 1874

Folder 3

Extent 2 p.

49: Letter. Sarah Nicholas Randolph, Shadwell Depot, Albemarle County, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 28 April 1874

Folder 3

Extent 3 p.

50: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 25 May 1875

Folder 3

Extent 3 p.

51: Senate Bill No. 251

Folder 3

Abstract A Bill to establish and maintain a normal school and to provide otherwise for the training of teachers for the public schools of Virginia. No official date on bill, but pencil note of 1872 or 1873.

52: Receipt, 9 March 1877

Folder 4

Abstract For Bonds belonging to the Virginia Agricultural & Mechanical College and to Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute.

Extent 1 p.

53: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, Virginia, 21 November 1877

Folder 4

Extent 4 p.

54: Notes. "Trip to the Northern Neck" by W. H. Ruffner, Hague 10 May 1878, Farnham, Richmond County, 11 May 1878, Heathsville, 13 May [1878], Lancaster Court House, 14 May [1878], and Richmond City, 16 May [1878].

Folder 4

Extent 15 p.

55: Article. "Congress and the Education of the People." Extract from Educational Journal of Virginia, March 1880

Folder 4

Extent 12 p.

56: Letter. Robert C. Winthrop, Boston, Massachusetts, to W. H. Ruffner, 3 December 1881

Folder 5

Extent 3 p.

57: Letter. Henry Barnard, Hartford, Connecticut, to [W. H. Ruffner], 5 December 1881

Folder 5

Extent 2 p.

58: Letter. S[amuel] C. Armstrong, Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, Hampton, Virginia, to General William Mahone, United States Senator, 5 December 1881

Folder 5

Extent 3 p., copy.

59: Letter. George W. Dame, Danville, Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, 23 January 1882

Folder 5

Extent 1 p.

60: Letter. S[amuel] C. Armstrong, Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, Hampton, Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, 16 October 1882

Folder 5

Extent 6 p.

61: Letter. John Eaton, Washington, to W. H. Ruffner, 17 [___] 1884

Folder 5

Extent 3 p.

62: Letter. Fitzhugh Lee, Evergreen near Alexandria, Virginia, to Grover Cleveland, [Washington], 21 November 1885

Folder 5

Extent 1 p.

63: Letter. W. H. Ruffner, State Normal School of Virginia, Farmville, to Grover Cleveland, [Washington], 27 November 1885

Folder 5

Extent 1 p.

64: Letter. J. T. L. Preston, Lexington, Virginia, to J. R. Tucker, 19 December 1885 with endorsement, J. R. Tucker, 22 December 1885

Folder 5

Extent 4 p.

65: Letter. J. R. Tucker, Washington, to Lucious Q. C. Lamar, Secretary of the Interior, [Washington], 22 December 1885

Folder 5

Extent 1 p.

66: Letter. J. R. Tucker, Washington, to the President of the United States [Grover Cleveland, Washington], 23 December 1885

Folder 5

Extent 2 p.

67: Letter. J. R. Tucker, Washington, to W. H. Ruffner, 6 January 1886

Folder 6

Extent 1 p.

68: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Lexington, Virginia 1 November 1890

Folder 6

Extent 3 p.

69: Letter. John B. Minor, University of Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Lexington, Virginia, 1 January 1891

Folder 6

Extent 2 p.

70: A card. "Mr. Ramsdell & Mr. Ruffner." W. H. Ruffner, Lexington, 25 October 1873

Folder 6

Extent 3 p.

71: Letter. W[illiam] T. Harris, U. S. Commissioner of Education, Washington, D. C., to W. H. Ruffner, Buena Vista, Virginia, 31 March 1896

Folder 7

Extent 2 p.

72: Letter. W. H. Ruffner, Lexington, Virginia, to John E. Massey, 29 April 1897

Folder 7

Extent 5 p., copy.

73: Letter. W. P. Huston, Lexington, Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, 21 Novembr 1898

Folder 7

Extent 2 p.

74: Letter. W. H. Ruffner, Lexington, Virginia, to A[mory] D. Mayo, [__] January 1900

Folder 7

Abstract Notes of William Henry Ruffner concerning his work in public education.

Extent 40 p.

75: Letter. W. H. Ruffner, Lexington, Virginia, to Mrs. Stephen Holland, Bedford City, Virginia, 2 May 1900

Folder 7

Extent 7 p., draft.

76: Letter. Mrs. Laura A. Holland, Bedford City, Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Lexington, Virginia 9 May 1900

Folder 7

Abstract Contains interesting facts about Booker T. Washington, whose mother, Jane Burroughs, was owned by Mrs. Holland's father, James Burroughs, of Halesford, Franklin County.

Extent 3 p.

77: Letter. [W. H. Ruffner], Lexington, Virginia, to [John A.] McGilvray, 31 January 1902

Folder 8

Extent 3 p., draft.

78: Letter. William A. Anderson, Richmond, Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Lexington, Virginia, 27 April 1904

Folder 8

Extent 5 p.

79: Letter. [W. H. Ruffner], Lexington, Virginia, to William T. Harris, 18 November 1904

Folder 8

Extent 2 p., draft.

80: Letter. Bruce R. Payne, Williamsburg, Virginia, to W. H. Ruffner, Lexington, Virginia, 20 March 1905

Folder 8

Extent 1 p.

81: Abstract. Rockbridge County Order Book 6, p. 10, April term 1802

Folder 9

Abstract Regarding John Chavis (ca. 1775-1838).

82: Abstract. From article on the Lexington Newsletter of 1819-1823, by W. H. Ruffner, published in the Rockbridge County News, 30 March 1895

Folder 9

Extent 1 p.

83: Abstracts. From the minutes of the Orange Presbytery, 8 April 1809-14 April 1842

Folder 9

Abstract Signed D. J. Craig, stated clerk of Orange Presbytery, regarding John Chavis (ca. 1775-1838).

Extent 17 p.

84: Letter. D. J. Craig, Reidsville, North Carolina, to H. P. Huston, [___] January 1898

Folder 9

Extent 3 p.

85: Letter. W. H. Roberts, Philadelphia, to W. P. Huston, Lexington, Virginia 20 January 1898

Folder 9

Abstract Enclosure: references to John Chavis (ca. 1775-1838) in the minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. from 1801 to 1839.

Extent 3 p.

86: Letter. William C. White, Warm Springs, Virginia, to W. P. Huston, Lexington, Virginia, 16 February 1898

Folder 9

Abstract Enclosure: references to John Chavis (ca. 1775-1838) in the minutes of Lexington Presbytery, 1799-1800.

Extent 6 p.

87: Abstracts. Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of North Carolina, 1896-1898

Folder 9

Extent 3 p.

88: Article. "An Educated Negro Preacher of a Century Ago" by William Henry Ruffner, n.d.

Folder 9

Extent 5 p.

89: Article. "Jack Neal," Kanawha Pieces No. 8, by [Henry Ruffner], n.d.

Folder 10

Extent 22 p.

90: List of Ante-bellum school teachers, n.d.

Folder 10

91: Notes on education in Virginia, n.d.

Folder 10

Abstract Pages 17 and 18 are wanting. There are two pages numbered 24 and two pages numbered 25.

Extent 28 p.

Physical Location Located in Oversize

92: Sketch of Henry Ruffner and William Henry Ruffner, n.d. and copy of letter, B[arnas] Sears, Richmond, to General Joseph R. Anderson, 13 December 1873

Folder 10

Extent 18 p.

93: Notes. Entitled "Private and Corporate Schools," n.d.

Folder 10

Extent 5 p.

94: Unpublished anecdotes of George Washington by Henry Ruffner, n.d.

Folder 10

Abstract Stories told to Ruffner by Edward Graham of Washington College.

Extent 4 p.

95: Newspaper clipping. "Henrico College." Unidentified.

Folder 10

96: "Education in Virginia." Notes by W. H. Ruffner, n.d.

Folder 10

Extent 16 p.

Physical Location Located in Oversize

97: Notes on the life of William Henry Ruffner made by his daughter Anne H. Ruffner, n.d.

Folder 10

Extent 82 p.

Physical Location Located in Oversize

98: Letter. Margaret J. Preston, Lexington, Virginia, to [W. H.] Ruffner, n.d.

Folder 10

Extent 2 p.

99: Letter. M. A. Jackson (Mrs. Thomas Jonathan Jackson), Cottage Home, to W. H. Ruffner, n.d.

Folder 10

Extent 2 p.

100: Miscellaneous notes.

Folder 10

101: Letter. Unidentified. Possible W. H. Ruffner, Richmond, to his wife, n.d.

Folder 10

Extent 1 p., incomplete.

102: Letter. S[amuel] C. Armstrong, New York, to W. H. Ruffner, n.d.

Folder 10

Extent 4 p.

103: Diary of William Henry Ruffner, 2 March 1870-24 August 1907

Folder 11

Abstract Principally a travel journal, giving very brief notations of places visited and speeches made.

Extent 300 p.

