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Manuscripts & Folklife Archives
Department of Library Special Collections
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1092

Descriptive Inventory

MSS 53 KNOTT Collection

5 boxes. 34 folders. 746 items. 1776-1953. Originals, typescripts.

1941.1.14

Related Collection: [MSS 675](#)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

James Proctor Knott was born on 29 August 1830, near Lebanon, Kentucky, in Marion County. His parents were Joseph Percy and Maria Irvine (McElroy) Knott. He received his early education in Marion and Shelby counties. In 1846 he began the study of law, which he continued to pursue after moving to Memphis (Scotland County) Missouri, in 1850. The following year Knott was admitted to the bar at Memphis, and he served in the ensuing years in the circuit and county clerk's offices. Knott married Mary E. Froman of Memphis on 17 November 1852; she died in childbirth in August of 1853. In 1857 Knott was elected Scotland County's representative to the state legislature. In 1858, Governor Robert M. Stewart then appointed him attorney general to finish the unexpired term of Ephraim B. Ewing. Knott married his first cousin Sarah "Sallie" Rosanna McElroy (1833-1915) on 14 June 1858; they had no children. Sallie was the daughter of the late Philip Edward McElroy (the brother of J. Proctor Knott's mother) and Lydia (Gibbs) McElroy; the couple had moved from Marion County to Bowling Green, Kentucky after their marriage. Lydia (Gibbs) McElroy's second husband was David Chapman of Warren County, Kentucky, supposedly the first white child born in that county.

In 1860, Proctor Knott was elected attorney general of Missouri. He had mixed feelings concerning the political camps of the time. He did not favor secession but thought that the federal government was trampling on the Constitution and was making excessive demands of the people. After Missouri came under the control of Unionists, a law was passed on 18 October 1861 requiring all state officers to take a loyalty oath to the United States. Knott contended that he had taken his official oath, and his refusal to take the loyalty oath resulted in his arrest, brief imprisonment, and disbarment from law practice in Missouri. Shortly after his prison release, he and Sallie returned to Kentucky. Late in 1862, the Knotts settled in Lebanon, Kentucky, where Knott opened a law office.

Following the Civil War, Knott was the Democratic elector of the 4th District of Kentucky to the U.S. House of Representatives for six terms, serving from 1867 to 1871 and from 1875 to 1883. He was elected governor of Kentucky in 1883, defeating

Thomas Z. Morrow. After his gubernatorial term, Knott was employed by the state to assist the attorney general with lawsuits. Later, Knott practiced law in Frankfort with T. L. Edelen. As a member of the 1890-1891 Kentucky Constitutional Convention from Marion County, Knott again proved himself to be an able statesman. Retiring from law practice in 1892, he accepted the professorship of civics and economics at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky. He also assisted in organizing Centre's law department in 1894. Poor health forced Knott to retire from Centre College in 1901, and he returned again to Lebanon. His homeplace, named "Lea Ridge", was destroyed by fire in August 1902; but he continued to live in Lebanon until his death on 18 June 1911.

Bibliographical Notes

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Mills, Edwin W. *Missouri Historical Review*, April 1937.

COLLECTION NOTE

The collection is formed around James Proctor Knott and includes family and business correspondence, 1850(?)–1911 (100 items). Very little of it relates to his public life as a member of the U.S. Congress and as governor of Kentucky, although a few letters reveal his views about the Civil War. Holographic, typescript, and printed copies of some of Knott's speeches, 1870–1891 (14), as well as some of his holographic writings, 1877, 1879, 1891 (10), are in the collection. In addition, there are several sketches and drawings (57) by Knott, and two Knott autograph albums: one covering the period of the 44th Congress from 1875 to 1877, and one covering the 1890–1891 Kentucky Constitutional Convention. Also, there are numerous newspaper clippings concerning Knott.

The materials of Sallie Knott include correspondence, 1859–1913 (138 items), with family and friends; some of which concern life in Missouri during the turbulent years of 1861 and 1862 (9). The letters, 1853–1863 (6), and diaries, 1861–1862 (3), of Proctor Knott's mother Maria Irvine (McElroy) Knott present a good picture of events in both Missouri and Kentucky. Late in 1860, Maria, who had been living with Proctor and some of her other children in Memphis, Missouri, returned to visit her family home in Lebanon, Kentucky and remained there until her death in 1864. Her diaries, kept from January 1861–January 1863, record daily life and her experience of the Civil War: the local tensions between Unionists and secessionists; the arrival and departure of troops from Ohio, Indiana, Minnesota, Kentucky and Tennessee; and fears over the approach of Confederate raider John Hunt Morgan. She expresses compassion for the hardships of soldiers encamped in the area – in a particularly emotional reaction (Diary #1, p. 39) she wishes that “the movers in this inhuman rebellion could all be at the cannons mouth

and be blown to atoms rather than so many innocent men should die [to] gratify their proud ambition” – but tires of the disruption caused by their appropriation of wagons, crops, livestock, water and timber, and by Confederate theft and vandalism. Maria also closely follows news of the war in Missouri and elsewhere in Kentucky.

A few items of associated families – Gibbs, 1780, n.d. (2); McElroy, 1833-post 1874 (10); and Chapman, n.d. (1) – are also in the collection, with one box being comprised of letters and a diary of the James Franklin McElroy family, 1874-1930 (115), of Bowling Green, Kentucky. Additionally, there are many photographs of the McElroy family and other individuals.

SHELF LIST

BOX 1	KNOTT, James Proctor, 1830-1911	1850(?) -1953	186 items
Folder 1	Biographical material - J. Proctor Knott and Sarah "Sallie" (McElroy) Knott	1910-1942	17 items
Folder 2	Family correspondence	1850(?) -1908	25 items
	2a - Knott - Letters to his wife Sallie	1850(?) -1898	8 items
Folder 3	Knott - Correspondence	1858-1886	23 items
Folder 4	Knott - Correspondence	1890-1911	39 items
	4a - Knott - Partial letters	1899, 1901, 1907	4 items
Folder 5	Letters and autographs (miscellaneous), mostly of Washington political personages	1870-1953	26 items
	5a - Autographs		12 items
Folder 6	Knott - Speeches and writings	1870-1891	14 items
	6a - Speech (holographic) - <i>On the Paving of Pennsylvania Avenue</i> (printed copies [2] and analysis)	May 20, 1870	2 items; 3 copies
	6b - Duluth speech, 1871, and 1890 Duluth speech (typed and printed copies	Jan. 27, 1871 July 1890	4 items; 5 copies

	6c - Duluth speech (holographic)	July, 1890	1 item; 2 copies
	6d - Pamphlet - <i>Bill to regulate the removal of causes from the state courts to the circuit courts of the U.S.</i>	Feb. 13-14, 1880	1 item; 3 copies
	6e - Pamphlet - <i>Governor's message</i>	Dec. 31, 1885	1 item
	6f - Pamphlet - <i>Andrew Jackson, An Address</i> ; partial holographic copies of speech (2); Andrew Jackson League ribbon, 1887	Jan. 8, 1890	4 items
	6g - Pamphlet - <i>Kentucky Schools of Medicine Doctorate Address</i>	June 19, 1890	1 item
	6h - Printed speech given in the Kentucky Constitutional Convention	Oct. 8, 1890	1 item
	6i - Pamphlet - Capital location speech	April 8, 1891	1 item
Folder 7	Knott - Holographic writings	1877, 1879, 1891	10 items
	7a - Short story - <i>Dixie</i>	Dec. 1877	1 item, 19p.
	7b - Political poem - <i>Extract from the log of Mojeska, lost off Piney Point</i> and untitled poem	May 30, 1879	2 items
	7c - Memorial address of the life and character of Henry Davis McHenry, delegate from Ohio County, delivered in the Constitutional Convention	Jan. 7, 1891	1 item, 15p.
	7d - Manuscript political booklet compiled by Knott with accompanying cartoons	n.d.	1 item
	7e - Composition about William Shakespeare	n.d.	1 item, 45p.

	7f - Composition about Pope Leo X	n.d.	1 item, 29p.
	7g - Miscellaneous writings	n.d.	3 items
Folder 8	Business papers	1860-1911	9 items
Folder 9	Invitations, announcements, etc.	1871-1914	22 items
BOX 2	Sarah Rosanna "Sallie" (McElroy) Knott, and Gibbs, McElroy, and Chapman families	1780-1923	185 items
Folder 1	Gibbs family - Letters	1780, n.d.	2 items
Folder 2	McElroy family - Papers	1833-post 1874	10 items
	2a - William E. McElroy - Essay about him	post 1874	1 item
Folder 3	Maria I. Knott - Outgoing letters and certificate	1853-1863	6 items
Folder 4	Maria I. Knott - Diaries Diary I (April 1861-June 1862) Diary II (June 1862-January 1863) Diary III (January-September 1861)	1861-1863	3 items
Folder 5	Sallie Knott - Outgoing letters	1859-1888	22 items
	5a - Civil War letters	1861-1862	9 items
	5b - Letters - Miscellaneous	1859-1888	13 items
Folder 6	Incoming family letters - Chiefly to Sallie and J. Proctor Knott	1879-1913	23 items
	6a - To Sallie Knott and Mary McElroy from Wickliffe Chapman	1879	1 item
	6b - To Mr. and Mrs. Knott and Mr. and Mrs. James B. Chapman from Ruth (Chapman) Castleman	1882-1902	5 items
	6c - To Mr. and Mrs. Knott from Edith G. Chapman	1882-1913	11 items

	6d - To Sallie Knott from her nephew, George Chapman and his family	1902; 1912	5 items
	6e - To Mr. and Mrs. Knott from his sister, Marion M. Nesbitt	1905	1 item
Folder 7	Family letters to Sallie Knott	1876-1913	39 items
	7a - From her sister-in-law Kate P. Chapman	1882-1911	7 items
	7b - From her brother Thomas Chapman	1882; 1911	3 items
	7c - From her sister Keturah Chapman	1901, 1902	8 items
	7d - From her sister-in-law Lizzie E. Pash	1901-1913	9 items
	7e - Family letters - Miscellaneous	1876-1909	12 items
Folder 8	From Ella Herbert	1882-1883	6 items
Folder 9	Miscellaneous letters	1867-1911	18 items
Folder 10	Sympathy letters - Following the death of husband J. Proctor Knott	1911	30 items
Folder 11	Sallie Knott and the McElroy family - Business papers	1841-1923	24 items
	11a - Sallie Knott - Papers	1901; 1911	3 items
	11b - McElroy family - Papers	1841-1923	21 items
Folder 12	Keturah (McElroy) Chapman - Writings about settlement of Chapman's Station, Warren County, 1790	n.d.	2 items
BOX 3	James Franklin McElroy family of Bowling Green	1874-1930	115 items
Folder 1	McElroy family - Correspondence	1874-1921	64 items

	1a - Mary (Chapman) McElroy - Letters to	1874-1921	39 items
	1b - Mary (Chapman) McElroy - Letters to	1899-1907	5 items
	1c - Mary (Chapman) McElroy and her daughter Sallie - Letters to	1900-1918	6 items
	1d - J. Frank McElroy - Incoming letter and certificate	1877; 1880; 1886	3 items
	1e - Lydia K. McElroy - Letter to	1874	1 item
	1f - Lydia K. (McElroy) Clark - Letters of	1900-1902	5 items
	1g - William D. McElroy, Sr. - Correspondence and diary, 1893	1893; 1901-1914	5 items
Folder 2	Sallie McElroy - Correspondence	1885; 1900-1921	26 items
Folder 3	William D. McElroy, Sr. and Jr. items and miscellaneous McElroy items	1875(?)-1930	25 items
	3a - William D. McElroy, Sr.	1888-1930	8 items
	3b - William D. McElroy, Jr.	1909-1919	6 items
	3c - McElroy items - Miscellaneous	1875(?)-1919	11 items
BOX 4	Pictures and Bible	1852	71 items
Folder 1	Pictures - 39 photos; 11 negatives, 7 albums, (225 photos)	n.d.	50 items
	Album 1 - 22 photos		7 items
	Album 2 - 18 photos		
	Album 3 - 36 photos		
	Album 4 - 40 photos		
	Album 5 - 24 photos		
	Album 6 - 17 photos		
	Album 7 - 50 photos		
	Daguerreotypes		13 items

	Sallie R. McElroy - Bible	1852	1 item
BOX 5	Drawings, clippings, autograph album, etc.	1776-1940	168 items
Folder 1	James Proctor Knott - Drawings	1863-1884	47 items
	1a - Drawing - <i>The Old Homestead</i> on cloth	1863	1 item
Folder 2	Knott - Drawings	n.d.	10 items
Folder 3	Items - Miscellaneous	1776-1924	39 items
	3a - 12 shillings bill	Mar. 25, 1776	1 item
	3b - Purdy family - Genealogy	1772-1825	1 item
	3c - Items - Miscellaneous	1789-1924	29 items
	3d - Calling cards (cards - 7; plate negative - 1)	n.d.	8 items
Folder 4	Newspaper and newspaper clippings	1867-1898	29 items
	4a - <i>The Louisville Mascotte</i>		
Folder 5	Clippings	1902-1940	42 items
Folder 6	Autograph album of the 44 th Congress (8" x 5 5/16")	1875-1877	1 item, 159p.
BOX 6	Autograph album	1890-1891	1 item
Folder 1	Autograph album of the Kentucky Constitutional Convention	1890-1891	1 item, 133p.
BOX 7	Autographs, autograph albums and photos	1877-1939	8 items
Folder 1	Autograph album of the 45 th Congress. Also, photo of J. Proctor Knott (7 1/2 x 9 3/8, 197p.).	1877-1878	6 items
	1a - Autographs	1939	4 items

Folder 2	Autograph album of Washington governmental officials and of Kentucky Legislature members, 1884 and 1886. Also, photo of Sallie Knott (7 1/2 x 9 3/8, 394p.).	1882-1886	2 items
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BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

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Correspondence (business and family), business papers, speeches and drawings of J. Proctor Knott, 1830-1911 -- lawyer, congressman, and Kentucky governor, of Lebanon; family correspondence and business papers of Sarah (McElroy) Knott, 1833-1915; Civil War diaries of Knott's mother; letters of the Gibbs, McElroy and Chapman families chiefly of Marion and Warren Counties; clippings and photographs.

5 boxes. 34 folders. 746 items.

MSS 53	KNOTT Collection	1877-1939
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_____ Addition, 1877-1939. 6 items.
Autographs (singly) [4], and autograph albums (2) - one of the 44th Congress, 1877-1878 and the other one of Washington governmental officials, 1882-1884, and of members of Kentucky Legislature, 1884 and 1886.

½ box. 2 folders. 6 items.
1941.1.14

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Anthony, Susan Brownell, 1820-1906 – Drawing of, 1877	B5,F1
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Authors – McElroy, Lucy (Cleaver), 1860-1901 – Letters of, 1901	B1,F2
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