

Missouri State Archives

Finding Aid RG 5.40

Office of Secretary of State Secretaries of State

Francis A. Rodman, 1865-1871

Records, 1866-1869

Abstract: Records (1866-1869) of Secretary of State Francis A. Rodman (1865-1871).

Extent: 7 folders.

Record Description: Paper.

Alternative Formats: None.

Location: Missouri State Archives.

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions: No special restrictions.

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Acquisition Information: Agency transfer. Accession #2018-0026.

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Historical and Biographical Notes

Francis Augustus Rodman (c1829-1881) was born as Franz Augustus Rodmann in Münster, Westphalia, Prussia on January 22 between 1823 and 1829. He studied in Detmold and Bonn, but

was exiled from Prussia during the 1848-1849 German Revolutions. Rodman immigrated to the United States and settled first in Louisville, Kentucky. He married Mary Magdalene “Lydia” Eberwine in October 1852 in Vigo, Indiana. Their first child, Herman, was born in Kentucky in 1853.

By 1856, the Rodmans were living in Clayton County, Iowa. Francis Rodman was elected Iowa State Representative in 1856 and served on the New Counties Committee and Library Committee in the General Assembly. He served one term. In February 1860, he left Iowa for Pike’s Peak, Colorado, where he set up a quartz mill and remained for roughly eight months.

Rodman and his family settled in St. Joseph, Missouri, sometime in 1861 or 1862. Rodman purchased a newspaper called *Westliches Volksblatt* and was also active in local politics. During the Civil War, he publicly stated his support of the Union and the abolition of slavery. He served briefly as the Quartermaster for the 43rd Regiment Infantry Volunteers. In May 1864, he announced his candidacy for Missouri Secretary of State on the Radical Republican ticket, to which he was duly elected by the voters in November of that year.

In June 1865, Secretary Rodman was the subject of controversy when he refused to let two individuals from St. Louis examine the election returns for Missouri’s new constitution, the so-called Drake Constitution. Rodman countered that the votes had not yet been certified and that the existing constitution specified that only the Governor or General Assembly could request access. This ordeal would earn him the nickname “Count” because of the scrutiny to which he was subjected when counting the votes and because of the narrow results. Newspapers that leaned Democratic dogged Rodman throughout his years of service for this event.

Rodman ran for Secretary of State a second time in 1868 on a platform of suffrage rights for Black men. Rodman won the election against his opponent Bernard Poepping. Because of the 1865 Constitution, the new term would be two years instead of four. This term, too, was not without controversy and there were several cases that were heard in the Missouri Supreme Court against Rodman regarding vote certifications.

In July 1868, Rodman sued *The Missouri Republican* newspaper in St. Louis for libel. The paper had printed a story about him being drunk in public at a Jefferson City bar and, with friends, reenacting a Presbyterian church service and communion using beer and crackers, which Rodman denied. Just one year earlier, Rodman was angry with another newspaper for printing a slanderous story against him. That time it was the *Westliche Post*, also in St. Louis.

He did have his supporters. In February 1869, Rep. C.C. Byrne introduced a bill to re-name Callaway County Rodman County. That same month, citizens of Johnson, Cass and Jackson Counties petitioned the General Assembly to form a new county, also to be called Rodman. Both proposals died in committee. Locally, Rodman helped manage his own private garden, called the Rodman Conservatory, which included hundreds of flowering plants and cacti; newspapers praised the garden.

Rodman chose not to run in the 1870 election. His Chief Clerk, Eugene F. Weigel, became Missouri’s next Secretary of State. Bankrupt and maligned by the papers, Rodman moved his

family to Chicago in 1873. There, he worked as a custom house inspector, a writer/journalist for a German newspaper and in various clerk positions. He still gave political speeches, but now for other candidates.

Missouri newspapers jokingly printed in 1873 that Rodman was appointed Minister to Siam, and they were more than happy to see him go. The joke was repeated in 1874 after Rodman had moved to Chicago. The German-language paper there, the *Illinois Staatszeitung*, wished him “the stomach of an ostrich” (an iron stomach) should he travel to Bangkok. In reply, Rodman traveled to the Radical Republican State Convention dressed as a decoy or scarecrow and pretended to disappear. The paper saluted his humor.

Francis Rodman died July 1, 1881, at his home in Chicago from a stroke.

Timeline

Year	Event
1823-1829	Born in Münster, Westphalia, Prussia
1848-1849	Immigrated to the United States
1852	Oct. 12: Married Mary/Marie Magdalene “Lydia” Eberwine in Vigo County, IN
1850-1856	Became a United States citizen
1853	Aug. 28: Son Herman J. “Josh” Rodman born in Kentucky
1855-1856	Son Frank Rodman born in Iowa; Frank died in infancy or early childhood
1856	Nov. 4: Elected State Representative from Clayton County, IA
1857	Mar. 9: Voted Secretary of the Rail Road Committee in Guttenberg, Clayton County, IA
1858	April: Moved from Guttenberg to Rossville, Allamakee County, IA where he worked for the School Fund Commissioner as an auditor
1859	January: Moved from Rossville to North McGregor, Clayton County, IA
1860	Feb. 21: Rodman left Iowa for Pike’s Peak, CO; his wife and children went to Indiana
1860	Daughter Tillie Rodman born in Indiana
1860-1862	He and his family moved to St. Joseph, Buchanan County, MO
1862	July: Voted Vice President of the Emancipation Society of North-West Missouri in St. Joseph
1862	Oct. 15: Voted a member of the Unconditional Union Convention in St. Joseph
1862	Nov. 28: Daughter Alma Th. [Theresa?] Rodman is born in Missouri
1862	Nov. 29: Elected Assistant Secretary to the Missouri Senate
1863	Dec. 3: Elected Secretary to the Missouri Senate, but returned to St. Joseph in February 1864
1864	May: Served as President of the local chapter of the National Union National Convention and was elected by the State Convention to be a delegate to the upcoming Cleveland Convention
1864	Aug. 11: Began serving as Quartermaster for the 43rd Regiment Infantry Volunteers
1864	Oct. 15: Wounded at the Battle of Glasgow
1864	Nov. 8: Elected Missouri Secretary of State on the statewide ballot

Year	Event
1864	Nov. 15: Resigned as Quartermaster to prepare for his upcoming position as Secretary of State
1864	Dec. 28: Began his duties as Secretary of State
1865	Sept. 24: Son Francis A. Rodman born in Missouri (unverified)
1866	Aug. 3: Son Francis A. Rodman dies (unverified)
1867	July 13: Son Francis A. Rodman born in Missouri
1870	June 15: Daughter Marie Antoinette "Toni" Rodman born in Missouri
1871	January: His position as Secretary of State ends
1871	March: Traveled to Washington, D.C. to advocate for swamp land grants for Missouri
1873	Moved to Chicago, IL
1888	July 1: Died in Chicago, IL

Additional Descriptive Information

Bibliography

[no title] *St. Joseph Gazette*. 03 July 1888: 3.

"Col. Francis Rodman." *Chicago Tribune*. 02 July 1888: 5.

"Ein Hartes Brod." *Illinois Staatszeitung*. 23 June 1874: 4.

"Zur Ruhe Bestattet." *Illinois Staatszeitung*. 09 July 1888: 8.

Related Material

RG3.18 Thomas Clement Fletcher, 1865-1869

RG3.19 Joseph Washington McClurg, 1869-1871

Francis Rodman Papers at The State Historical Society of Missouri, #C1726:

<https://files.shsmo.org/manuscripts/columbia/C1726.pdf>.

Records, 1866-1869

Extent: 7 folders

Arrangement: Alphabetical

Scope and Content

Records filed with the Secretary of State.

Container List

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
1	24	Bollinger County court order changing county seat name	October 2, 1868
1	25	Correspondence regarding impeachment of Walter King, 5th Judicial Circuit judge	March-June 1867
1	26	Correspondence regarding voter registration	May, September, 1867
1	26A	Correspondence regarding return of state seal	May 27, 1869
1	27	Order from Governor McClurg authorizing payment of war bonds	July 1, 1869
1	28	State bonds regarding purchase of arms	1866-1867
1	29	Land Grant for University of Missouri School of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts	July 24, 1860