

The Filson Historical Society

Memoir and Scrapbook of Ernest Christian Bohné

Memoir and Scrapbook of Ernest Christian Bohné (1840-1909), a German immigrant to Louisville in 1856, founder of the Western German Savings Bank, school trustee, charity commissioner, and member of the First Board of Park Commissioners. Bohné was one of the city's most prominent businessmen from 1860-1900.

For information regarding literary and copyright interests for these materials, see the Curator of Manuscripts, James J. Holmberg.

Size of Collection: 2 items, .66 cubic feet

Location Number: Mss.\A\B677

Scope and Content Note

Collection includes a photocopy of an 1880-1881 memoir handwritten by Bohne and his .5 cubic foot scrapbook (ca. 1880-1900). The memoir recounts Bohne's childhood in Cassel, Germany, his schooling, and his immigration to the United States in 1856. Also discussed are: his father's service in Napoleon's army during the campaign in Russia, genealogy of the Bohne family, his arrival in Louisville, Louisville's German community, employment in Louisville, and various business ventures. Bohne also comments extensively on American culture and discusses various influences on the national character. Near the end of the memoir he discusses Grant's visit to Louisville in 1879 and his friendship with Supreme Court Justice John Marshall Harlan.

The scrapbook contains assorted correspondence, invitations, programs, reports, clippings, and photos pertaining to: banking and finance in Louisville, the Commercial Club, expositions, the German community, the Satellites of Mercury, and the development of the city's municipal park system.

Biographical Note

Ernest Christian Bohne (1840-1909)

Born February 8, 1840 in Cassell, Germany to Johann J. J. and Helen Maria (Wurtemberger) Bohne. Bohne's father was a successful publisher and bookseller, and was an officer in Napoleon's army during the Russian campaign from 1810-1812.

E.C. Bohne was educated at an elite gymnasium in Germany, but in 1854 left school and began learning the book trade. Not content with this line of work, Bohne went to sea and landed at New Orleans in 1856. From there, he traveled immediately upriver and settled in Louisville. In 1861, Bohne found employment as a bookkeeper in a dry goods store. During the Civil War he served with a company of home guards as quartermaster sergeant. In 1862 Bohne began work as the office manager and bookkeeper at the Louisville Hotel, a position he held for some ten years.

In 1863, Bohne married Amelia Marie German and together the two had a daughter and four sons: Hellen Bohne (Mrs. Henry Schimpeler), Charles Otto Bohne, Ferdinand W. Bohne, Philip Judge Bohne, and Ernest F. Bohne.

In 1872, Bohne organized the Western German Savings bank and became its cashier. Two years later, the bank was reorganized as the Third National bank of Louisville. Bohne remained as cashier of the bank until 1905 when he transferred to the Southern National Bank.

Bohne won acclaim as an astute banker and financier, delivering numerous addresses and authoring several papers on banking issues. During his career, he transacted business for the British Consul in Baltimore and the Imperial German Consul in Cincinnati.

In addition to his exemplary career in the banking industry, Bohne took a lead role in Louisville's civic affairs. From 1867 to 1870, he served as a school trustee, from 1877 to 1880 as a charity commissioner, and in 1891 as a member of the first board of park commissioners. As a park commissioner, Bohne was instrumental in selecting the sites for Cherokee and Shawnee parks, and in entrusting the development of the parks to Olmsted and Co, the most prominent landscape architects of the day.

Bohne died March 24, 1909 in Louisville.

Subject Headings

Banks and banking - Kentucky
Bohne, Ernest Christian, 1840-1909
Commercial Club (Louisville, Ky.)
Emigration and immigration - Germany
Emigration and immigration - Kentucky - Louisville
Garfield Club (Louisville, Ky.)
German Americans - Kentucky - Louisville
Highland Park (Louisville, Ky.)
Hotels - Kentucky - Louisville
Louisville (Ky.) - History - 19th century
Napoleonic Wars, 1800-1815 - Campaigns - Russia
Parks - Kentucky - Louisville