

∞ The Ward M. Canaday Center ∞  
for Special Collections  
The University of Toledo

Finding Aid

➤James M. Ashley Papers, 1860-1960◀  
MSS-002

**Size:** 6 linear feet

**Provenance:** Received from After James M. Ashley's death, his memoirs were located in two places. His original manuscript, with one typescript version, was inherited by his son, William Meredith Ashley. John Morgan found these papers in William Meredith Ashley's barn in Waterville, Ohio in the 1950s. A second typescript version typed by Ashley's daughter, Mrs. Gordon Stevenson, was given to Morgan by Mrs. Stevenson in the early 1950s. Mr. Morgan acquired the remaining papers from the Ashley heirs in the 1950s and retained custody of them until 1982 when he donated them to the University of Toledo Libraries. In 1986 he donated his own papers which were generated in connection with his James M. Ashley research. Meredith Ashley's son, Thomas Ludlow Ashley, as spokesman for the Ashley heirs transferred all literary rights to the Ward M. Canaday Center of the University of Toledo Libraries in 1984. However, he did request that the Canaday Center provide the Ashley heirs with copies of publications containing significant portions of Ashley papers. This requirement is made simply for the purpose of the family in seeing how the papers are being used. Researchers bear full responsibility to acquire necessary permission to publish excerpts from this collection, subject to provisions of the Copyright Act of 1976.

**Access:** Open

**Collection Summary:** Collection consists primarily of Ashley's memoirs, which were written during the last year of his life; a few letters written to him by his son Charles; and a fragmentary political proposal. The papers were collected by John M. Morgan, Professor Emeritus of Library Administration, University of Toledo, in conjunction with his thesis research (UT thesis, "James M. Ashley and Emancipation," 1940).

**Subjects:** [Politics and Government](#)

**Related Collections:** Toledo, Angola, and Western Railroad Records, MSS-102

**Copyright:** The literary rights to this collection are assumed to rest with the person(s) responsible for the production of the particular items within the collection, or with their heirs or assigns. Researchers bear full legal responsibility for the acquisition to publish

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from any part of said collection per *Title 17, United States Code*. The **Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections** may reserve the right to intervene as intermediary at its own discretion.

**Completed by:** Paul Gifford February 1986 and Barbara A. Shirk December 1990; last updated: June 2014.

### Biographical Sketch

The papers of James M. Ashley (1824-1896), radical Republican congressman and railroad executive from Toledo, consist of memoirs written in the last year of his life, a few letters written to him by his son, Charles S. and a fragmentary political proposal. Ashley died before he could complete his memoirs and, although they ignore his later business career, they do discuss his youth, ideological development and political campaigns to 1886. Their value is enhanced by the absence of other Ashley papers, due to a fire at his home.

John M. Morgan, Professor Emeritus of Library Administration at the University of Toledo, is responsible for acquiring the James M. Ashley papers. While working on his Master's thesis (James M. Ashley and Emancipation - 1940)\* at the University of Toledo, he contacted all available Ashley family members. At that time they consisted of Ashley's daughter-in-law, Mrs. Charles Ashley; her sons, William Meredith; Edward; James M. III; and her son-in-law, Edward Hewitt. In the 1950s, all of Ashley's papers were eventually turned over to Morgan who donated them to the University of Toledo Libraries in 1982. Morgan continued his historical research on Ashley through 1960 and in 1986, he turned over his correspondence and writings in connection with this research to the University Libraries. John Morgan died on May 25, 1991.

\*Thesis can be found in the Ward M. Canaday Center of Carlson Library at the University of Toledo.

- 1824 Born in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania
- 1826 Family moved to Portsmouth, Ohio
- 1840 Ran away from home and worked as a cabin boy and clerk on boats on Ohio and Tennessee Rivers
- 1848 Editor of *Portsmouth Democrat*
- 1849 Admitted to Ohio Bar
- 1851 Married Emma J. Smith of Kentucky; moved to Toledo and opened a drug store
- 1856 Delegate to Republican National Convention
- 1857 His drug store burned and was not rebuilt
- 1858 Nominated and elected to U. S. Congress
- 1860 Re-elected
- 1862 Re-elected
- 1863 Introduced the first proposition to amend the Constitution of the U. S. to abolish slavery
- 1864 Re-elected

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- 1865 Secured passage of the 13th Amendment
- 1866 Re-elected
- 1867 Initiated plans to impeach President Andrew Johnson
- 1868 Defeated in Congressional election
- 1870 Was appointed territorial governor of Montana by President Grant but was removed within a year due to his criticisms of President's policies
- 1872 Participated in Liberal Republican convention; returned to law practice in Toledo and soon switched to the Democratic Party
- 1875 Moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan; became interested in the possibility of a railroad extending from Toledo across to the Michigan peninsula
- 1877 Purchased railroad terminals at Toledo and began to build the road North to Lake Michigan, which became Toledo, Ann Arbor and Northern Michigan Railroad. He was its president for the next sixteen years.

### Scope and Content Note

The main part of the James M. Ashley Papers consists of memoirs by Ashley written in July 1896. These describe his childhood, family life, and intellectual and ideological development until his removal to Toledo in 1852, and his political campaigns in 1854, 1856, 1858, 1862, and 1868. Further revision to his manuscript resulted in incomplete second and third drafts and in confusing pagination and order of the original manuscript. A typescript note asserts that there is nothing in the original manuscript which is not contained in the typescript (actually carbon) versions. However, close examination indicates that the typescript versions lack parts of the original. The user, therefore, is advised to look at both manuscript and typescript versions. Typescript fragments indicate Ashley projected, or actually wrote, other chapters on the views of churches toward slavery and on the Underground Railway.

Another fragment, apparently written by Ashley in the 1890s, is a proposal for reorganization of city administration. This document, incomplete as it is, is significant in documenting a connection between views of an old Radical Republican and views held by early Progressives of the last decade of the 19th century.

Finally, there is a group of letters, dated 1884, from Charles S. Ashley describing Charlevoix, Michigan, and its potential as a depot on the Ann Arbor Railroad. A manuscript article by Charles S. Ashley details an episode in his father's political life.

A fire during James M. Ashley's life destroyed what existed of his personal papers. The value of this collection, then, is self-evident. As a firebrand Congressman during and after the Civil War, students of history will always find the Ashley papers of interest. Unfortunately, though, little in this collection documents his railroad presidency.

Incorporated into this collection are the papers of John M. Morgan, Professor Emeritus of Library Administration at the University of Toledo. They consist primarily of correspondence; photostats and transcriptions of various Ashley letters and clippings; writings by Morgan on the subject of Ashley; Ashley family photos; and a photostatic copy of the First Reconstruction Bill of James M. Ashley.

Folder List

box	folder	Folder Title
1	1	Correspondence from Charles S. Ashley (1884-1920) Memoirs (James M. Ashley)
	2	Introduction, First and Second Chapter (First Draft)
	3	“A Chapter On My Congressional Campaigns” (First Draft)
	4	“Campaign of 1862” (First Draft)
	5	“1868” (First Draft)
	6	Notes (First Draft)
	7	First and Second Chapters (Second Draft) [Typescript]
	8	“A Chapter On My Congressional Campaigns” (Second Draft)
	9	“Fragments For Other Chapters (Second Draft)
	10	First and Second Chapters (Third Draft) [Typescript]
	11	Proposal for Board of Control [Fragment] by James M. Ashley
	12	Essay “The Case of Mr. Case” by Charles S. Ashley
2		Correspondence of John M. Morgan With:
	1	Ashley Family and Others (1953-1960)
	2	Federal and State Agencies (1951-1959)
	3	Historical Societies and Libraries (1952-1960)
	4	Correspondence (Miscellaneous) of James M. Ashley (Photostats and Transcripts)
	5	Manuscript - “Railroad Built On Wind: James M. Ashley and the Ann Arbor Railroad” by John M. Morgan
6	Publication In <i>Northwest Quarterly</i> (1950) by John M. Morgan	

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7	Outlines by John M. Morgan (Suggestions and Notes for Changes)
8	Bibliographies (John M. Morgan)
9	Clippings Pertaining to James M. Ashley (1861-1936) (Photostats and Transcriptions) (Collected by John M. Morgan)
10	First Reconstruction Bill of James M. Ashley (1862) (Photostat) (Collected by John M. Morgan)
11	Ashley Family Photos (Collected by John M. Morgan)