FALCONNET, EUGENE FREDERIC (1832-1887)
PAPERS, 1857-1888

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INTRODUCTION

The Eugene Frederic Falconnet Papers concern the career of E.F. Falconnet (1832-1887), engineer, soldier metallurgist, and inventor. These papers were given by Stanley F. Horn through the courtesy of Mrs. W.H. Hayley, Memphis, Tennessee.

The materials in this collection measure 1.26 linear feet. There are no restrictions on the materials.

Single photocopies of unpublished writings in the Eugene Frederic Falconnet Papers may be made for purposes of scholarly research.
SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Eugene Frederic Falconnet Papers, containing approximately two hundred items, span the years 1857 to 1888. The collection is composed of correspondence, most of which deals with Falconnet’s work on his invention of an airship; his works on a book entitled *Practical Aerostatics*; a Civil War diary; legal documents (patent applications); scientific journals; military records; music; notes; photographs and drawings; printed materials; and writings. This collection documents Falconnet’s career as an engineer, soldier, metallurgist, student of aeronautics and inventor.

Falconnet was a Swiss railroad engineer who immigrated to Mexico in 1849 and then to the United States in 1850. He was involved in railroad construction in Mexico and in Tennessee and Alabama in the United States. Prior to 1880, he invented a process for the use of electricity in metallurgy, and began research on the invention of an airship. Falconnet was a major in the 7th and 9th Alabama Regiments, Alabama Cavalry, Confederate States of America.

The historical value of this collection for the researcher interested in early aeronautical research and experimentation is to be found in letters written by D.W. Glassie to Falconnet regarding patent matters and correspondence with William H. Weightman who advised him on problems of propulsion.

The correspondence with William H. Weightman November 10, 1884, and with others, Falconnet advanced the idea of using aluminum and petroleum in an airship. In a letter to Charles Latimer, May 19, 1886, Falconnet postulated correctly the belief that aluminum must be used in an alloy with copper and zinc.

The Falconnet Papers include a Civil War diary (1862-ca. 1865) which contains eyewitness accounts of battles in Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi, as well as Falconnet’s philosophical views on the North-South conflict. The diary makes reference to: European public opinion about the Civil War (pp. 3-6); Southern attitudes about the “War for Separation;” Federal and Confederate artillery; use of steamboats, flat boats, ferries and gun boats (pp. 11-15); effect of typhoid fever (p. 13); Battle of Shiloh (pp. 26-27); Confederate army uniforms, blankets, saddles and food (pp. 35-38); rural backwoods life in north Alabama-people, schools, churches, distilling, snuff-dipping, etc. (pp. 42-43); rebel yells (p. 16, 2nd sec.); drinking and fighting in the South (pp. 17-18, 2nd sec.); roads (p. 20, 2nd sec.); and General Sherman.

There is an interesting document in the military records (see attachment) which shows how Falconnet campaigned for election to first lieutenant early in his Confederate States of America Army career. The document is dated June 18, 1861, Camp Watkins (no state given), and has the original signatures of seventy-five corporals and privates of Company “A” 1st Regiment of Tennessee Artillery.

Legal documents include several applications for patents on aeronautical research and iron smelting processes. These papers show Falconnet’s involvement in the early iron industry in Tennessee, the use of his engineering skills in railroad construction, and the use of his talents as an inventor in aeronautics and metallurgy.

The Falconnet Papers include music composition by Falconnet: *Annabel Lee*, *Rosebud*, and *Marguita*. There are rough notes on various subjects including; campaigns of Felix Zollicofer, a German article on slavery, the South, etc.
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Eugene Frederic Falconnet

1832 Born July 15, Bern, Switzerland as Eugene Frederic de. Freudenreich Falconnet

1849 Moved to Mexico; involved in construction of a railroad

1850 Emigrated to the United States

1852 Came to Tennessee; changed name to Eugene Frederic Falconnet

1857 Composed music for ‘Annabel Lee’, ‘Rosebud’, ‘Mariguita’ (poems by Edgar Allen Poe)

1861 May, enlisted in Confederate States of American Army; ca. June 1861 became First lieutenant

1862 Promoted to rank of Major

1864 Married January 12 to Ann America Burtwell of Florence, Alabama

1865 Surrendered to Federal forces; paroled May 11

1866-ca.1886 Railroad construction, Tennessee

ca. 1880-1887 Worked for iron works at Aetna Iron Manufacturing Company and Standard Charcoal Company, Nashville and Hickman County, Tennessee

ca. 1879-1887 Engaged in aeronautical research and efforts to construct a dirigible

1887 Died October 14; buried in Mt. Olivet Cemetery, Nashville, Tennessee
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Microfilm Container List

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