

Finding Aid to the Johannes Bonekemper Papers

Bonekemper, Johannes, 1795-1857

Johannes Bonekemper Papers, 1802-1856

.2 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 91

[Biography](#)

[Scope and Content](#)

[Box and Folder List](#)

OVERVIEW

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BIOGRAPHY

Johannes Bonekemper was born on July 6, 1795 in Niederbraeunfeld, near Neumbrecht, in Rhineland, Prussia. His mother died when he was seven years old; five years later his father died. With a family of four brothers and sisters Bonekemper stopped going to school, since they were very poor. He had to earn a living as a domestic servant to help feed his family.

Leaving home at the age of twenty, Bonekemper decided to learn the blacksmith trade. However, after having spent a year at his birthplace, Bonekemper desired to become a minister. He was then notified he had to become a soldier and in 1817 he was sent to France. Throughout his military life he spread his

Christian beliefs. Then in 1820 Bonekemper received his discharge from the army. In 1821 he entered school in Basel, Switzerland, to prepare himself for missionary work. In 1824 he was ordained as an Evangelical minister and was sent to serve the isolated German colonies in the Black Sea area of South Russia.

Bonekemper's most satisfying years were those from 1835 to 1846. He spent 24 years of ministry work at Rohrbach traveling to Odessa, Freudental, Bessarabia, Cherson, and other colonies. In 1848 he moved to Atmadscha, Dobrudscha (then part of the Ottoman Empire) where he preached the gospel for five years. Because of the Crimean War (1854-1856), Bonekemper and his family were driven out of Turkey, going back to his Prussian birthplace of Nuembrecht which he had not seen for thirty-four years. There he lived until his death on January 24, 1857.

Rev. Bonekemper was married three times. There were eight children. The oldest son, Carl, came to the United States in 1849 at the age of twenty-two. He was ordained a minister in 1851. Carl returned to south Russia in 1865, where he served the Reformed Church at Rohrbach-Worms until 1876, when he again immigrated to the United States, where he lived from 1849 to 1854. He served churches in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Iowa; Wisconsin; and South Dakota, retiring at Scotland, South Dakota. Carl died on September 17, 1867.

The article "Johannes Bonekemper and His Family" (*Heritage Review*, No. 24, 1979) by Carl Bonekemper, translated and edited by Theodore C. Wenzlaff, appears in folder one of the collection.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The **Johannes Bonekemper Papers** consists of carbon copy typed transcriptions in German of his diaries (1828 to 1838 and 1847 to 1856), several letters, and an autobiography. They document his life as a pastor in the German colonies of Rohrbach, South Russia and Atmadscha, Dobrudscha. They include his daily schedule as a pastor, missionary work in the colony and rural areas, as well as his religious lessons and notes of sermons to colony parishes. Letters to his children and his brothers cover his plans to move to Turkey in 1848 and then the difficulties in leaving Turkey in 1856.

Volume one includes an autobiography beginning with his youth, education, family, years as a soldier from 1817 to 1820, his years at school in Switzerland, and his introduction to missionary work as an Evangelical pastor at Rohrbach. The 1828 - 1829 diary covers his work with his parish and with outlying areas of Rohrbach.

The **Diaries Series** consists of six volumes of typed transcriptions in German covering from 1828 to 1838 and again from 1847 to 1856. Volume two contains his diary from 1829 to 1830. It covers his three years as a soldier and his work in Elberfeld to work for a blacksmith later returning to Basel, Switzerland. Coverage includes his studies from 1821 to 1824; birth of Wilhelmine Bonekemper on December 7, 1828; and frequent mention of Friedrich Judt.

Volume three contains his diary from 1831 to 1832, including a letter to his father-in-law, Hofrath von Heinleth, and an excerpt from Ratgeber für Auswanderungslustige von Traugott Bromme. Mr. Straub, a teacher, tells the story about Johann Fehr, how he became ill, recovered and turned to God afterwards; also documents outbreak of rabies and cholera.

Volume four contains his diary from 1832 to 1838 with his thoughts regarding religion and philosophy. Mentions the birth of his daughters, Julie Johanne (born on December 6, 1832), and Karoline Wilhelmine (born on April 12, 1834). There is frequent mention of Schauffler and Fletnitzer (no first names given).

Volume five covers his diary from 1847 to 1851, including letters to the following: Gottlob Schauffler and to Johann Bonekemper's brother, Johann Heinrich, the board of directors of the German local missionary society, Ali Pascha and Bonekemper's children, Emilie, Mine, Sophie and Julie.

Volume six includes his diary from 1851 to 1852, with letters to the following: Joh. in Rohrbach and Eva in Odessa, missionary W. Schauffler, Pastor Dr. Fr. W. Krummacher, Adam Sprenger, and John Eberhardt Link. There are more frequent exchanges with W. Schauffler concerning problems with Friedrich, Bonekemper's son; Pastor Bonekemper's resignation is mentioned.

Volume seven contains his diary from 1852 to 1856. It includes letters sent to: pharmacist Linz at Schotsch in Silistria, daughter Emilie, Joseph Lang, G. D. Schneider, daughter Sophie, son Friedrich Wilhelm, Johann Rohrbach in Odessa, and Pastor W. Krummacher. Also covers Bonekemper's departure from Admadscha, daughter Emilie's marriage to Joseph Lang; more letters to all his children.

A 63-page typed synopsis of the diaries of Rev. Bonekemper excerpted by Brigitte von Budde and completed in 1990 is available in the collection.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bonekemper, Carl. "Johanne Bonekemper and his family." Translated and edited by Theodore C. Wenzlaff. *Heritage Review* 24(Sept. 1979): 14-20.
- Bonekemper, Edward H. *Bonekemper family tree: the descendants of Wilhelm Bonenkamper (1750-1807) and Wilhelmine Froehling Bonenkamper (? -1802)* Greenwich, Conn.: E.W. Bonekemper, 1869 (GRHC CS71.B68 1967)
- Bonekemper, Johannes. *Papers of Johannes Bonekemper*: loaned by Mrs. Ivan Bonekemper of Sutton, Nebraska. Nashville, Tenn.: Historical Commission, Southern Baptist Convention, 1978. (Annex Microfilm BX9480.R93 B66)
- The carbon-copy typed transcriptions in German are also available on microfilm. In addition to the seven volumes in these papers, the microfilm also includes an eighth volume - both the typed transcription and the original. This volume includes sermons of Johannes Bonekemper and a John Newton, and the memories of Christine Bonekemper (1820-1895). The original volume also includes financial records.
- Bonekemper, Johannes. *Vermächtnisse der Pastoren Johannes und Carl Bonekemper an das evang. reformirte Kirchspiel Rohrbach-Worms: zum Andenken an die Einweihung der neuen Kirche zu Worms.* [S.l. : s.n., 1868?] (GRHC BX9465.B66 1968)

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder	Contents
1/1	Biographical material and Register
1/2	Volume 1, Autobiography, letters, diary, 1828-1829
Diaries Series	
1/3	Volume 2, Diary, 1829-1830
1/4	Volume 3, Diary, 1831-1832
1/5	Volume 4, Diary, 1832-1838
1/6	Volume 5, Diary, 1847-1851
1/7	Volume 6, Diary, 1851-1852
1/8	Volume 7, Diary, 1852-1856