Businessman, husband, father, civic leader. These are but a few words which
describe the subject of my research. His name is John H. Ruwe. While not a native
Savannahian, he lived the majority of his mature life in Savannah. Mr. Ruwe was
born in Hanover, Germany in 1840.¹ He was the youngest son of his parents, Anna
and Gerhart Ruwe.²

Mr. Ruwe left Germany while he was still young, around the age of 12. He
traveled to New York where several of his brothers lived.³ He lived in New York
until sometime in 1867. He came South and ended up in Savannah. He arrived in
Savannah by ship. When his ship was pulling into port, there were several young
ladies on the waterfront watching the ship come in. Miss Caroline Elizabeth Ruckert,
one of these young ladies, remarked how handsome one of the men on deck was.⁴
The man she was talking about was Mr. Ruwe, and three years later Caroline Ruckert
and John Ruwe would be married.

The first concrete evidence I find of Mr. Ruwe is in the 1867 City Directory
and the 1867 tax records. The previous year, 1866, he is not mentioned in either
of these. In 1867 he is listed as working in a bar room.⁵ He would not stay
there long. Before the year was out, he had gone into business with J.H. Strous.⁶
They were proprietors of Savannah Steam Bakery, 67 and 69 Bay Street.⁷ This
partnership did not last long. The dissolution of their partnership was in the
November 3rd Savannah Morning News. This was not dissolved in an ugly manner, for
the following lines followed the announcement. "The undersigned, in retiring,
would respectfully solicit for Mr. Ruwe a continuance of the liberal patronage
bestowed on the late firm."⁸ Signed John H. Strous. Mr. Ruwe continued in the
baking business making his a leading industry in Savannah.

During his first year in Savannah, Mr. Ruwe not only set himself up in
business; but he also acquired his first property. On July 2, 1867 he bought lot #32 Crawford Ward at a public auction for $1,810.00. This property fronts on South Broad (now Oglethorpe Avenue), bounded on the north by Hull Street and on the south by McDonough Street. This was the first of his many real estate acquisitions.

It was during Mr. Ruwe's first few years in Savannah that he began his club activities. He was a member of a volunteer fire department called the Marshall Hose Company. In fact Mr. Ruwe's name was among those mentioned in the newspaper as petitioning for this fire department's official name. His name was also mentioned as a main part of putting together the Marshall Hose Company's picnic to celebrate the first anniversary of the department. He was mentioned often in concern with the company, but these two facts were of main interest.

Another organization he was very active in was the Savannah Schuetzen Gesellschaft. This translates as a shooting society or a gun club. He was to serve as this organization's secretary and treasurer in consecutive years. He also worked very hard in preparation for this society's annual festival. There was also a society of the same name in Charleston, and the Savannah and Charleston clubs were very competitive. Although this society was written up in the Morning News many times, I could not find any evidence of it anywhere else.

In just two short years Mr. Ruwe had become very involved in the affairs of Savannah. On October 11, 1869 he was appointed Special Deputy Sheriff, along with several other men, in compliance with the request of the Superintendents of the election for Mayor. He was to serve three times on the Grand Jury for the Superior Court while he lived in Savannah.

It is also during this year that his bakery is written highly of in the newspaper. The Morning News speaks highly of the Savannah Steam Bakery and gives
Little of the firm's history. The bakery originated around 1866 by several enterprising gentlemen. The paper states that Savannah can be proud of having one of the South's largest bakeries in the city. Mr. Ruwe is spoken highly of, also. Not only was Mr. Ruwe an energetic manager, but would sell ship bread, biscuits, and crackers at New York prices.

Mr. Ruwe's personal life seems to be doing well, also. He met Miss Caroline Ruckert somehow, and they were married September 1, 1870. They were not married in Savannah, but went to New York to be married. They were married in St. Paul's Church, a United German Evangelical Lutheran Church. The Reverend J.H. Schulz officiated. I have no idea as to why they were married in New York. Mr Ruwe did have family and other connections in New York, and perhaps his wife did, too.

Mr. and Mrs. Ruwe's first home was 79 Jones Street. It must have been here where their first child was born, a boy named Henry. When Henry was about a year old, the Ruwe's traveled to Germany. Mr. Ruwe had been left his father's estate, and he went to settle it. He did not keep the property, but sold it to his brother-in-law in order to keep it in the family. It is not known how long they stayed, but I believe they were away from Savannah for approximately a year and a half.

While in Europe, Caroline had another baby. This time, a little girl, baby Julia. Tragedy struck on their way home, for baby Julia died before they reached New York. Little Julia is buried in New York with some of Mr. Ruwe's family.

Back home in Savannah the Ruwe's are living on McDonough, one door west of East Broad. Again though, tragedy strikes. On December 6, 1872, the funeral for Mr. Ruwe's brother-in-law, Caroline's brother, is held at their home. He was killed while cleaning a Confederate gun. He is buried in the Ruwe's plot in Bonaventure Cemetery.

The location where the Ruwe's lived until 1876 was the property he bought in
1867, Lot #32 Crawford Ward. In 1870 he was building a two story four tenement brick building. In 1875 and 1876 he acquired Lot #39 Columbia Ward. He acquired this in two separate transactions. The first he bought April 14, 1875 from Mary L. Adams for the sum of $2,250.00. This was on the corner of South Broad. On June 7, 1876, he bought the remaining portion of Lot #39 Columbia Ward. This was a strip of the lot, and he bought it from the executors of the Estate of John Houston for the sum of $75.00. After 1877, the Ruwe's address is given as 208 South Broad. They would live here until 1904 when they moved in with Mrs. Ruwe's mother, Mrs. Catherine Ruckert.

This was to be where John and Caroline Ruwe would raise the rest of their children. After baby Julia, another son was born. His name was John W. Ruwe. John would not stay in Savannah, for he moved to California with his wife. Following John was Bertha, born in 1877. Another son followed in 1879. His name was Edwin. He died at the age of four and is buried in the family plot in Bonaventure. In 1881, Fred was born. He stayed here all of his life and is also buried in the family plot. May Ruwe was born in 1884. She married here, and she and her husband are buried in the family plot, also. Another baby boy followed May. His name was Herbert. He died at the age of one and a half. Helen was the baby of the family. She is now living in Winston Salem, North Carolina. Altogether, the Ruwe's had nine children, three of whom died when they were young.

During this time Mr. Ruwe's bakery had been through some good and some bad times. One interesting item I found was the change of numbers in the business address. In an 1870 advertisement in the Morning News this appeared: "Mr. Ruwe's Ship Bread and Cracker Bakery, 67 and 69, New Number, 73 Bay Street". This address of 73 Bay Street is the one which appears most. He would enlarge the bakery, and as he did this, the business address grew. He also had branches, one on St. Julian and one on
address is 73 and 73½ Bay Street.

In 1879 Mr. Ruwe's business suffered from a disastrous fire. It happened on Monday, October 27. The entire bakery was destroyed. They were able to save the safe and some valuable papers as well as many barrels of flour and a few barrels of candy. The fire was discovered around four o'clock and firemen rushed to the scene. The bakery was located between Abercorn and Lincoln and had deep depth. The fire was so bad that people living behind the bakery began moving things out of their homes in fear of the fire spreading. The building occupied by the bakery was owned by the estate of the late George B. Cummings. The building was fully insured. Mr. Ruwe's losses were about $20,000.00 of which around $12,000.00 was insured. Since they were able to save one hundred and seventy five barrels of flour, these were moved to the branch on Congress. The paper suggested that the fire was set deliberately by someone walking by one of the open windows in the rear, which was situated by an oven.  

Nothing more was said about the fire in the Savannah Morning News. One month later, Mr. Ruwe bought this property from Catherine Cummings. This was called Lot #3 in the Second Tything of Reynolds Ward, and a part that is fourteen feet of the adjoining lot westward in the same tything and ward. There was a front on Bay Street of 75 feet and the depth was ninety-two and one half feet running to the lane. He paid $4,400.00 for this property.

The first mention I find on the bakery after this dreadful fire was in the February 18, 1880 Savannah Morning News. Mr. Ruwe has hired Captain Charles J. White as a traveling salesman. By this time Mr. Ruwe's business seems to be established once again. In 1882 Mr. Ruwe's bakery again suffers another fire. This one was not nearly as bad as the first one though. It burned on Thursday, October 26, and he is once again open for business on the following Wednesday. It is after this fire that Mr. Ruwe seems to be having some money problems. In 1883 he makes a loan from
Annie Meitzler for $3,000.00, payable in five years. He signs over his house as collateral. He fulfills the obligations on this, and on June 14, 1888 the deed is signed back to him. However, on the same day he borrows $5,000.00 from Mrs. Fannie Joseph, again turning over the deed to #39 Columbia Ward as collateral. He again pays this in the time allotted, and the deed is transferred back to him in 1895. On June 15, 1888 he also borrowed $4,000.00 from Samuel Herman, and he repays this in 1899. In 1892, he made a loan of $4,000.00 from Louisa Banks, payable in two years. He is not able to repay this loan, however; and the property he used as collateral (eastern one-third of Second Tything of Reynolds Ward) goes to Mrs. Banks. In 1902 he loses another piece of property he had used as collateral. This one goes to Jacob Cohen, and it is his piece of property at Tybee.

Mr. Ruwe is still in the bakery until 1894. After this there is no more mention in the City Directory of it. He put the bakery up for sale in 1885. In 1886 there is still another fire at the bakery. Again, this one is not too serious. After 1886 there is no further mention of Mr. Ruwe in the Savannah Morning News until his death in 1906.

Mr. Ruwe sells the land the bakery is located on to R.B. Lutterloh on July 16 and July 19, 1891. He sells this property for $11,500.00 total. Then with his loss of the third piece of his business property to Louisa Banks in 1892, all the property his business held was gone. Mrs. Banks must have rented 71 Bay to him after she owned it for his address from 1892 until 1894 is 71 Bay Street.

It made me very sad to learn of all these misfortunes happening to Mr. Ruwe. He seems to have been a very trustworthy and moral man, or the people would never have lent him the money. He was also honest enough for Mr. Francis Ruckert to leave him power
of attorney over all of his property while he was away from Savannah from September 8, 1884 until March 7, 1890. 45

Mr. Ruwe and his family moved in with Mrs. Catherine Ruckert after 1904. This is where the Ruwe's lived, 207 East Jones Street, when he died at Tybee after suffering a cerebral hemorrhage.
1. All of the information in these first four footnotes I acquired in conversations with the two descendants of Mr. Ruve, Mrs. Robert Glen and Mrs. Catherine icy, both granddaughters of Mr. Ruve.

5. 1867 City Directory of Savannah, Georgia Historical Society.


10. Annals of Savannah, Savannah Newspaper Digest. Volume 18, 1867, part 1, page 244.


12. This translation I learned in conversation with Miss Mildred Cartellmann, Historian for Lutheran Church of the Ascension.


16. The dates he served were April 11, 1879, February 20, 1880, November 11, 1881, February 1882.

18, 19, 20, 21. The information for these four footnotes came off of the copy of the marriage license of John and Caroline Ruve. Mrs. Robert Glen has this copy in her possession and she gave me the information.

22. Information also received from Mrs. Glen during our conversation.

23. 1871 City Directory of Savannah. Savannah Public Library.

24, 25. From conversations with descendants of Mr. Ruve.

26. 1874-75 City Directory of Savannah. Savannah Public Library.


29. Mrs. Glen knew this, there was no record of him in any censory records.

29. Used the Vincent Map in the basement of the Historic Society to figure this out.

31. Savannah City Directories 1877 thru 1904. The 1897 Directory says 310 South Broad, and the Directories 1902 thru 1904 say 310 East Oglethorpe. These were all the same place. (Across from the Police Department.)


34. 1877 and 1879 City Directories of Savannah.


36. See Deed Book 4y, folio 437.


38. See Deed Book 5j, folio 439 and 6j, folio 245.

39. See Deed Book 6j, folio 250 and 6j, folio 246.

40. See Deed Book 6i, folio 391.

41. See Deed Book 8v, folio 259.

42. Savannah Newspaper Digest, 1885, A-N. page 107.

43. Annals of Savannah, Savannah Newspaper Digest. Volume 37, 1886. page

44. See Deed Book 6z, folio 120 and 7a, folio 96.

45. See Deed Book 5r, folio 344.
There were several puzzles I ran into during the course of my research. The first one I had difficulty with was the lack of a marriage license. I had checked all of the reasonable places and could not come up with one. The solution was one of pure luck. In talking with Mrs. Robert Glen, I found that she had a copy of the marriage license of John and Caroline Ruwe. She also solved another problem, that of not being able to find any record of Mr. Ruwe leaving a will. Because of his financial difficulties he really did not have much to leave and there was no will.

When I went to visit Mr. Ruwe's cemetery plot, there were two gravestones that did not correspond with the cemetery records I had looked up. I found one by further searching the records, and the other I found in conversation with Mrs. Glen.

While searching the Lutheran Church of the Ascension Records, I never found any evidence of John and Caroline going there. These records did not have a list of all the members, but lists of marriages, funerals and confirmations. Just my luck, from the years 1900-1909, the minister did not keep any records. I was looking for the 1906 records to see if Mr. Ruwe had been buried by the Lutheran Minister. The Little Black Book from Fox and Weeks solved this for me, for it gave me the name of the minister who performed the service. Mr. Schaeffer was the minister and a check in the City Directory proved he was the minister of the Lutheran Church of the Ascension.

There were only two problems left unsolved. One was how did Mr. Ruwe lose all of his money. His two granddaughters gave me two suggestions. One said he lost money when his bakery burned, (which he did about $8,000.00), and another said he gambled on flour futures and lost his money. These were something like the stock market. Both of these suggestions sound plausible, but I could find no concrete evidence as to why. There is concrete evidence to his financial problems because this shows up in the deeds.

The second problem again had to do with money. There were several transactions which took place between Fannie Joseph of New York and Annie Keitzer
of Savannah and Mr. Ruwe. These did not really have crucial importance as to Mr. Ruwe, but they were a great curiosity. Perhaps further studying of these deeds will shed light.

I can not thank enough the help I received from his granddaughters, Mrs. Catherine Fapy (May Ruwe Ingram's daughter) and Mrs. Robert Glen (Helen Ruwe Urquhart's daughter). Without the information I learned from these two I would have had but a mere shell of Mr. Ruwe's life.
List of those buried in Bonaventure

John H. Ruwe
Caroline Ruckert Ruwe
Herbert Ruwe
Edwin Ruwe
Bertha Ruwe
Fred Ruwe
May Ruwe Ingram
Victor Ingram
Mrs. Catherine Ruckert
Mrs. Ruckert's son

Section C, Lot 28, Bonaventure Cemetery
purchased by Mr. Ruwe, May 11, 1983
J.H. Ruwe Died After Bath In the Surf: Fell Fainting on Beach at Tybee and Never Recovered.

After struggling exhausted from the water at Fort Screven, Tybee Island, yesterday afternoon, Mr. J.H. Ruwe of 207 East Jones Street, fell on the beach in an unconscious condition. Mr. Ruwe was carried to the post hospital where he died last night at 8:10 o'clock.

Information of Mr. Ruwe's condition was received here at 3:30 o'clock by the police, who at once communicated with his family. There was no explanation of the cause of Mr. Ruwe's condition further than that it was critical. Arrangements were at once begun for Mrs. Ruwe to go to the bedside of her husband. As the last train to the island left the city at 3:30 o'clock, Capt. Jacob Paulsen, tendered the use of the tug Cynthia, and Mrs. Ruwe accompanied by Mrs. I.V. Ingram made the trip to Tybee on this. They arrived a few minutes before Mr. Ruwe breathed his last.

Mr. Ruwe owns considerable property adjoining that government reservation at Fort Screven. It was reported to him that a well on one of these lots had caved in and he went down on the train leaving here at 9:00 o'clock in the morning to investigate. It is supposed that after finishing his business, Mr. Ruwe decided to go in bathing, as he was an expert swimmer. For some time, however, he had not been in the best of health and his feebleness was remarked on by some of those who saw him go into the water.

After remaining in the water a short while, Mr. Ruwe came out, and it was seen that he was in some distress. Some of the soldiers at Fort Screven who had watched him in bathing started to his assistance, when he fell on the beach in a fainting condition. He was quickly picked up and carried to the post hospital
where everything possible was done for him, but it was evident from the first
that his condition was a hopeless one.

The remains were allowed to remain at Fort Screven during the night and
will be brought to Savannah for burial. Mr. Ruwe was 68 years of age and has
lived in Savannah since boyhood. He was born in Germany and after landing in
New York came straight to Savannah. He married here and reared a family of six
children, who with his wife survive him. They are; Miss Helen and Bertha Ruwe,
Mrs. I.V. Ingram, Messrs. J.W. Ruwe of San Antonio, Texas, Henry Ruwe of New York,
and Fred Ruwe of Dallas, Texas. The funeral arrangements will not be completed
until Mrs. Ruwe returns to the city this morning.

Just what caused Mr. Ruwe's death is not yet known.

Savannah Morning News  September 22, 1906.


4. General Index; Wills, Estates, Administrations, Etc. Chatham County Georgia. Volume II, L-Z.

5. Index to Deeds, Etc. Grantee 1785-1910, R-Z.


8. Index to Marriages, Book 4, L-Z 1806-1957


10. Index to Marriages 1873-1877, (white). C.O.C.C.


17. The History of the German Friendly Society, 1837-1937. Dr. Linn.


19. The Georgia Zoologist and Allied Families; Copy. 1956, Mrs. Pearl Ron Gram.