

DOUGLASS LUSE PAPERS, 1819-1893

Collection #
M 0397

Table of Contents

[Collection Information](#)
[Biographical Sketch](#)
[Scope and Content Note](#)
[Box and Folder List](#)
[Cataloging Information](#)

Processed by
Eric Mundell
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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 manuscript box
COLLECTION DATES:	1819-1893
PROVENANCE:	Gift of Robert H. Rhodehamel, Indianapolis, IN, September 29, 1983
RESTRICTIONS:	none
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the Indiana Historical Society
ALTERNATE FORMATS:	none
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	none
RELATED HOLDINGS:	
ACCESSION NUMBER:	1983.0907
NOTES:	none

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Douglass Luse was born 15 October 1795 in Albermarle County, Virginia, the son of Zephaniah Luse (1767-1848) and his wife, Elizabeth Douglass. The couple married in Virginia and were pioneers of Urbana, Champaign County, Ohio, arriving there around 1805. The family name has been spelled Luce and Luse interchangeably, through the latter is more prevalent. The known children of Zephaniah and Elizabeth were Douglass, Elizabeth Luse Paxton, Sarah "Sally" Luse Read, Mary, Susan, and Rhoda Ann Luse Hannaman. There is also mention of a "Polly" or "Polly Ann" who was apparently Mrs. W.B. Johnson. Elizabeth, Susan and Rhoda Ann are among those persons whose correspondence is included in the collection.

As a young man, Douglass Luse was said to have served his father as a messenger between Urbana, Ohio and Detroit, Michigan while the elder Luse was acting as assistant commissary under John H. Piatt during the War of 1812. Douglass eventually became a tanner by trade and was a respected businessman in the Urbana community. In 1820, he married Rachel or Rachael Taylor who was born ca. 1802 and died ca. 1862. According to the 1850 census, they had two sons, Archibald and Douglass Junior. The obituary for Luse also mentions two daughters, Jane and Florilla. It notes that while he had no formal education, Luse was an "educated" person who was "well informed...communicative and instructive." He was an active member of the Urbana Baptist Society, though he joined the Presbyterian Church in 1843. Little else is known about him since there is little correspondence left by him personally. Luse died on or about 26 September 1894 in Urbana, 20 days short of his 99th birthday.

The most significant part of the collection consists of letters from Luse's relatives in Indianapolis, Elizabeth Luse Paxton, Susan Luse, Rhoda Ann and William Hannaman and Douglass Luse, Jr. Elizabeth Luse Paxton was born 7 or 8 February 1798 in Virginia. About 1818, she married James Paxton, who was born ca. 1793 and was among the earliest settlers of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana. He first visited the area in the winter of 1819-1820, built a home the following winter, and returned in 1821 to reside there with Elizabeth. A carpenter and builder by trade, Paxton was the contractor for the first court house of Marion County, built during the years 1822-1824. Paxton became a leading citizen in Indianapolis. He was elected colonel of the militia in 1822 and later was chosen as Quarter Master General of the cavalry. He served in the legislature for the sessions of 1823-24, and 1825-26, and as county assessor for 1822-23. He died 5 April 1829, having suffered "a fit of billious collick." Elizabeth outlived her husband by nearly fifty years. Though she and James had no children to survive them, the 1820 census reveals that they likely had at least one son. Elizabeth never remarried, though she often employed a girl to assist her with household tasks. She dedicated the remainder of her life to work in religious and charitable organizations, particularly the Indianapolis Benevolent Society, and she spent much time nursing the ill and clothing the poor. Her many friends referred to her affectionately as "Aunty" Paxton. She was interested in many churches and assisted in organizing the Methodist Church (Wesley Chapel), where her influence was felt for many years. In 1857, her estate was valued at \$18,000-\$20,000, though her monetary wealth decreased in later years. She lived on Monument Circle until about 1872, and then moved to 228 N. Alabama Street, where she died 30 March 1878 at the age of 80.

Elizabeth's sister, Susan Luse, lived with her for many years. Susan was never married and apparently divided her time between staying with relatives in Indianapolis and Urbana. She was born ca. 1810 in Ohio, where she received some education, and was living in Indianapolis as early as 1835. At the time, there was some speculation that she might marry Ovid Butler, a law partner of Calvin Fletcher, though this never occurred. Like her sister, Susan spent much of her time in service to the Indianapolis Benevolent Society and to church activities. After Elizabeth's death, there was much concern among relatives for Susan's welfare, so Douglass Luse arranged for Susan to return to Urbana.

Another sister, Rhoda Ann Luse, also moved to Indianapolis, where she joined Elizabeth. Evidently the youngest of the Luse children, Rhoda Ann was born 25 February 1812 in Ohio. After coming to Indianapolis, she met and married William Hannaman on 28 August 1833. Hannaman was a printer by trade who had come to Indianapolis about 1826 or 1828 and was first employed by the Indianapolis Journal. He opened a drugstore with Caleb Scudder about 1832 or 1833 and the two also became proprietors of an oil and cotton mill which was the first of its kind in the area to manufacture flaxseed oil. Hannaman held many offices, including superintendent of the Sabbath School of the Methodist Episcopal Church, school commissioner, a director of the Indianapolis branch of the State Bank, a Whig candidate for state Senate in 1841, trustee for the Indiana Female College in 1851, trustee of the State University, a member of Indiana's Central Temperance Committee and president of the Indiana Sanitary Commission which was

founded in 1862. He ceased operating his drug business after 1863, and began devoting his time to benevolent and charitable causes. In 1871, Hannaman joined the brokerage firm of Smith and Hannaman and was associated with that firm until he died of pneumonia at hot Springs, Arkansas, 6 December 1880. William and Rhoda Ann Hannaman were parents of at least seven children, most of whom died in infancy. Only their children Henry and Mary lived to adulthood. Rhoda Ann died in September 1876 and William was married in 1879 to Mrs. A.F. Berry, who survived him.

Douglass Luse's son, Douglass Junior, was a graduate of the Starling Medical College in Columbus, Ohio and possibly received further medical instruction. The younger Douglass practiced medicine around the Indianapolis area before and after his service in the Civil War. While in Indianapolis, he also watched over his aunts, Elizabeth and Susan. He later moved to San Mateo County, California.

Sources of Information:

1. 1820 *Census of Champaign County, Ohio*, p. 426.
2. 1850 *Census of Champaign County, Ohio*, pp. 752, 788
3. 1850 *Census of Marion County, Indiana*, pp. 448-449
4. *Champaign County, Ohio Marriage Bonds, 1805-1865*, microfilm reel #317334.
5. Eulogy for Douglass Luse. *Urbana Daily Times Citizen*. (Friday, 28 September 1894).
6. *The History of Champaign County, Ohio*. Chicago: W.H. Beers and Company,, 1881. (1972 reprint)
7. Nowland, John H.B. *Early Reminiscences of Indianapolis*. Indianapolis: Sentinel Book and Job Printing House, 1879. p 430.
8. Obituary of Elizabeth Luse Paxton. *Indianapolis Journal*. (Monday 1 April 1878, p. 8)
9. Sulgrove, B.R. *History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana*. Philadelphia: L.H. Everts and Company, 1884. (1974 reprint) pp. 29, 31, 44, 48, 162-163, 495, 497.
10. Thornbrough, Gayle and others (eds.) *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher*, Volumes I-VII: 1817-1862. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972-1980.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Luse papers are divided into two parts: one group consisting of family letters to Luse, and the other containing Luse's personal and business papers.

The bulk of the collection consists of family letters addressed to Douglass Luse in Urbana, Ohio. Letters were written by many relatives: the Paxtons, Hannamans, Reads, Smiths, Taylors and others - most of whom resided in Indianapolis, Indiana. The correspondence focuses on family affairs and health concerns, but there is also discussion of local events, the economy, religion, politics, business, agriculture, weather, travel and a few references to the Civil War.

Of those letters written to Luse, the greater portion of them is chiefly from his sisters Elizabeth Luse Paxton and Susan Luse, and his brother-in-law William Hannaman. The largest number of letters was written by Elizabeth. She wrote frequently to her brother and discussed issues which were important to her. In particular, she was concerned about religious activities, the bad condition of roads, high prices, taxes and the deaths of old settlers. In a letter dated 26 January 1836, Elizabeth supports the construction of a railroad through Indianapolis, though she expresses disfavor about the canal being built at that time and considers it "more injurious to health."

Elizabeth's husband, James Paxton, also wrote to Douglass Luse. His two surviving letters deal with land purchases and finances. He discusses the presidential election of 1824, describing Indiana voters as being "warm for Clay," and he tells about the escape and capture of Indian murderers from Madison County, among other topics.

Susan Luse, like her sister, describes local events, tragedies and social and religious activities around Indianapolis experienced in 1838. Years later, in February 1862, Susan noted some details about the Civil War. She mentioned that army officers were stationed at Columbus and that many ailing and wounded prisoners were being brought to

Indianapolis.

Elizabeth and Susan's younger sister, Rhoda Ann Luse Hannaman wrote some letters to her brother Douglass, telling him about travel and the growth of Indianapolis. Most of her family letters, though, were written by her husband, William Hannaman, a businessman and civic leader. His letters maintained a formal tone, and he discussed business politics, travel, agriculture and various other topics. He appeared to be a spokesman and guardian for the Indiana branch of the Luse family, as he kept Luse informed about family concerns and business.

The collection also contains letters of Luse's son, Douglass Junior. The earliest correspondence dates to his early years as a medical student in Columbus, Ohio. Douglass told his father about his many educational experiences and described, in detail, the primitive and unsanitary conditions in the medical school laboratories. At least one letter exists which he wrote while serving in the Civil War. His other correspondence relates to family matters, including information about his aunts and other Indianapolis relatives.

Luse also received letters from numerous nephews, nieces, cousins and other relatives, some whose relationship is not identified. The majority of these letters and notes contain almost exclusively family news although sometimes other information is provided. Mary E. Hannaman, a niece, writes with news about "Secesh" prisoners at Camp Morton in 1863, and a nephew, Sheridan P. Read, tells about "Wyandotte corn," while another niece and a cousin report to Douglass about their genealogical research.

Family letters are in Box 1, folders 1-18, of the Douglass Luse collection. Correspondence is arranged according to the writer and each division of letters is filed chronologically within the folders. Folder 18 includes miscellaneous letters and notes, which the various family members sent to one another, but not to Douglass. Occasionally, correspondence from two relatives was included in the same letter. In such a case, the letter was filed under the name of the person whose share of the correspondence occupied the larger portion of the letter.

The second part of the collection (Box 1, folders 19-22) consists of Luse's personal and business papers. Included in this group is correspondence from friends and associates, primarily relating to Douglass' tannery business. Letters refer to prices, wages and supplies in relation to operating the tannery. Whenever there was some doubt as to where non-family correspondence should be filed, it was placed in the grouping of personal and business correspondence. Two letters included in this file were not addressed to Luse, though he apparently acquired them through his business dealings.

The files of business papers and records include bills, vouchers, receipts, expense lists, indentures, estate records, inventories and important family history notes. Among these records, there are several charge accounts from Douglass Luse's tannery, expense accounts of his aunt, Jane Mason, the estate inventory of Zephaniah Luse and an inventory of Elizabeth Paxton's bequests, along with some family biographical notes.

Also included in this section of the collection is a group of the few existing letters written by Douglass Luse to other family members. This correspondence concerns family matters, visits and business, especially property and estate settlements. Douglass Luse seemed to be particularly concerned about finding a place for his sister, Susan, to live following the death of their sister, Elizabeth Luse Paxton.

Some of the most significant correspondence in the collection refers to Calvin Fletcher, noted Indianapolis lawyer, banker and civic leader whose diaries from 1817-1866 provide valuable information about his friends, the Paxtons and the Hannamans. Fletcher and his wife, Sarah, relocated in Indianapolis at the same time as the Paxtons. The following are letters that mention Fletcher and his family and were written to Douglass Luse by the persons listed:

24 April 1835	Elizabeth Paxton
9 August 1836	Elizabeth Paxton
8 October 1837	William Hannaman
17 January 1838	Susan Luse

24 July 1838	Elizabeth Paxton
2 February 1846	Elizabeth Paxton
6 March 1847	Elizabeth Paxton
23 April 1866	Elizabeth Paxton
4 June 1866	Elizabeth Paxton

The two letters dated 1866 include information about Fletcher's riding accident and details of the events leading to his death several weeks later.

BOX AND FOLDER INVENTORY

BOX 1

Part I Family correspondence

FOLDER	CONTENTS
1	James Paxton correspondence, 1824-1825
2	Elizabeth Luse Paxton correspondence, 1827-1837
3	Elizabeth Luse Paxton correspondence, 1838-1849
4	Elizabeth Luse Paxton correspondence, 1856-1866
5	Elizabeth Luse Paxton correspondence, 1867-1869
6	Elizabeth Luse Paxton correspondence, 1870-1878
7	Susan Luse correspondence, 1838-1858
8	Susan Luse correspondence, 1860-1875
9	Rhoda Ann Luse Hannaman correspondence, 1835-1861 (?)
10	William Hannaman correspondence, 1834-1839
11	William Hannaman correspondence, 1841-1880
12	Douglass Luse, Jr. correspondence, 1853-1862
13	Douglass Luse, Jr. correspondence, 1864-1887
14	Correspondence from nephews, 1872-1887
15	Correspondence from nieces, 1863-1893
16	Correspondence from cousins, 1845 and undated (2)
17	Miscellaneous correspondence to Douglass Luse, 1849-1873
18	Miscellaneous correspondence among related family members (excluding Douglass), 1819-1878

BOX 1 Personal and business papers of Douglass Luse

Part II

FOLDER	CONTENTS
19	Personal and business correspondence, 1831-1892
21	Business papers and records, 1820-1830
21	Business papers and records, 1835-1882
22	Douglass Luse correspondence to other family members, 1829-1882

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's [online catalog](#)
2. Click on the "Local Catalog" icon.
3. Search for the collection by its call number, using the letter or letters designation and **four** digits (e.g., M 0715, SC 2234).
4. When you find the collection, go to the "Holdings" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.

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