

Collection #  
SC 3654

**WILLIAM AND DAVID LINN ROSS FLOUR COMPANY  
LETTERS, 1884-1885**

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|------------------------|---|
| Collection Information | 1 |
| Biographical Sketch    | 2 |
| Scope and Content Note | 3 |
| Contents               | 4 |

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## **COLLECTION INFORMATION**

**VOLUME OF  
COLLECTION:** 1 folder

**COLLECTION  
DATES:** 1884-1885

**PROVENANCE:** Mrs. Hudson's Fine Books and Paper, Cold Spring, NY

**RESTRICTIONS:** None

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**ALTERNATE  
FORMATS:**

**RELATED  
HOLDINGS:** David [E.] Ross: Modern Pioneer, T40 .R65K4 1946

**ACCESSION  
NUMBER:** 2021.0020

**NOTES:**

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

William and David Linn Ross were born in 1845 and 1851 respectively, to Tippecanoe County pioneers David and Mary (Henderson) Ross. The Ross homestead was located on Main Street opposite 7<sup>th</sup> Street in Lafayette. Both brothers attended Ira W. Allen's preparatory academy in Lafayette. William then attended Washington College at Canonsburg, Pennsylvania and served briefly in the Civil War. After the war both brothers worked with an uncle, William P. Henderson, in a wholesale grocery firm called Henderson & Ross.

The brothers founded the W. and D. L. Ross Flour Company in 1880. They dealt wholesale flour and grain under this company for at least five years. In 1892 the brothers, along with their other siblings, purchased 80 acres of land in Lafayette and formed the Highland Park Land Company. They developed the land as a restricted residence district. Today, residents of the historic Highland Park neighborhood participate in an active Neighborhood Association.

By 1906, David E. Ross, a nephew of the brothers, had devised a much-improved steering gear for agricultural vehicles and trucks. In that year, William and David L. provided \$50,000 to establish the Ross Gear and Tool Company. This company would bring the Ross family—and Lafayette—wealth and notoriety. By the time of his death in 1943, David E. Ross held patents on hundreds of devices. The Ross gear was used in over 70 different types of military vehicles during World War II.

William Ross died in 1913. In 1929, David Linn Ross and his wife Eleanor donated money to establish the William Ross Memorial Hospital east of Lafayette, which specialized in tuberculosis cases. In 1923, D. L. Ross erected the Ross Building on the site of the old Ross homestead at Main and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets. In 1928, he offered the upper story of that building as temporary headquarters for the Tippecanoe Historical Society and the Lafayette Art Association. The Neoclassical building is now a contributing structure in the Upper Main Street Historic District in Lafayette. D. L. Ross died in 1932.

### Sources:

“David E. Ross” *A History of Tippecanoe County and the Wabash Valley* (Dayton, Ohio : National Historical Association, 1928), p. 179

“David Linn Ross ... Taken by Death” *Journal and Courier*, 11 June 1932

<https://usautoindustryworldwartwo.com/rossgear.htm>

Materials in collection

“Upper Main Street Historic District” <https://npgallery.nps.gov/>

“William Ross Dead After Long Illness” *Journal and Courier*, 28 January 1913

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

This collection consists of 8 letters written by William Ross to David Linn Ross during the operation of their wholesale flour business. The letters are dated between 12 December 1884 and 26 March 1885. During the period of the letters, William was in Lafayette and David was in Charleston, South Carolina. The letters discuss daily business in Lafayette, grain prices, and weather. Envelopes are present, some of which include additional writing. Letter of March 9 includes a sketch of a seated woman writing a letter.

Also included is a memorandum dated 31 March 1885 which includes a list of assets on hand, some of which are marked "sold." The assets are abbreviated, sometimes by a single letter.

## **CONTENTS**

### CONTENTS

W. and D. L. Ross Flour Co. letters

### CONTAINER

Folder 1