Descriptive Summary

Title: Theophilus Erskine Ross Family Collection

Dates: 1914-1942

Creator: Ross Family

Size: 72 items, 1 box, 4 Series, 14 folders, .25 cubic feet

Abstract: Dr. Theophilus Erskine Ross, Robert Mars Ross, and WSF Tatum are exclusively featured/mentioned in this collection of financial and construction related documents donated by Dr. Tommy King, the current President of William Carey University. The year book of Dora Ross from 1915 is also included in this collection. These documents describe the functions of MWC’s Board of Trustees as they worked with banks and contactors to develop the college’s campus.

Collection Number: A2012-001, M002

Language of Material: English

Storage Note: Consists of one acid-free manuscript box located in WCU Archives. Dora Ross’ Pine Burr, 1915 has been placed into an acid-free envelope. Some of the documents are oversized and therefore folded.

*The Pine Burr from 1915 has not been digitized for access on WCU Libraries Online.

Biographical/Historical Note

The Ross’ were a prominent family in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Dr. Theophilus Erskine Ross, Sr., was born in Philadelphia, Mississippi in 1864. He was a member of the directorate of the First National Bank of Hattiesburg, thirty-second degree of Scottish Rite Masonry, a member of the Independent Order of the Odd Fellows, a member of the Knights of Pythias, and also a member of the Woodmen of the world. (This information was found on a Web site called [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com) that featured an article from the History of Winston County, Mississippi). He was also very active in William Carey University’s history as the President of the Board of Trustees of the Mississippi Woman’s College. He married Dora Mars in 1892
and they had two sons: T.E. Ross, Jr. and Robert Mars Ross. Dora Ross during 1915, the date of the *Pine Burr* found in this collection, was a sophomore at MWC. Ross Hall and the Ross Medal were named in honor of Dr. T.E. Ross.

Both T.E. Ross’ were medical doctors, so it is difficult to tell exactly which one served as the college physician and President of the Board of Trustees for Mississippi Woman’s College, most likely, both of them did. Mention of one of the T.E. Ross’ is prevalent in both academic publications starting in 1911-1978. Dr. T.E. Ross, Sr. died in 1935, while Dr. T.E. Ross, Jr. died in 1978. Another clue that can define the presence of either father or son is their dates of birth; Senior was born in 1864 while Junior was born in 1894. This gives a perspective as to who did what; for example, Dr. T.E. Ross established the Hattiesburg Hospital in 1900. Junior would have only been six years old. The documents contained in this collection may be from both father and son because some of the correspondence and contracts date back to 1914. Dates regarding Tatum’s loan date after Dr. T.E. Ross, Sr.’s death.

Much of the correspondence within this collection is between W.S.F Tatum and R.M. Ross. Robert M. Ross was considered an industrious businessman of his day. He is mentioned one time in MWC’s *Pine Burr* from 1940-1. Other than that, he and T.E. Ross are present in this collection of documents. Other prominent names found within this collection are Carnes, Polk, Montague, Bass, and Culpepper.

This financial correspondence had to do with loans for campus construction, deed of trust regarding the property, and the MWC’s Board of Trustees. Overall, this collection of documents consists of financial and construction documents regarding Mississippi Woman’s College’s development from 1914-1942. Some of the construction contracts found in this collection are probably associated with the construction of the new administration building in 1914 (this information can be found on p.58 of 1913-1915 of MWC’s Bulletin/Catalog). Other construction contracts and documents are associated with developments regarding MWC’s growing campus.

**Sources Consulted:**

The History of William Carey University

William Carey University Library Online Archives: *Pine Burr*, Catalogs dating from 1911-1978

The History of Winston County, Mississippi from [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com).

**Arrangement:**

**Series I:**
- Financial-
  - Checks and Deposit Slips
  - Contracts
Correspondence

Series II:
  Construction-Contracts
  Correspondence

Series III:
  Special Item-Financial Correspondence

Series IV:
  Mississippi Woman’s College, Pine Burr Annual

Scope and Content:

Box 1:

  Folder 1: Financial-Checks & Deposit Slips  January 28, 1937-Dec 15, 1942
  Folder 2: Financial-Contracts   March 1916-January 28, 1937
  Folder 3: Financial-Correspondence   January 28-July 26, 1937
  Folder 4: Financial-Correspondence   December 7-December 10, 1942
  Folder 5: Financial-Correspondence   December 15, 1942
  Folder 6: Construction-Contracts  April 29-May 1, 1914
  Folder 7: Construction-Correspondence  April 20, 1914
  Folder 8: Construction-Correspondence  March 18-March 27, 1915
  Folder 9: Construction-Correspondence  April 8-May 28, 1815
  Folder 10: Construction-Correspondence  May 2-May 20, 1916
  Folder 11: Construction-Statements   November 21-December 8, 1814
  Folder 12: Construction-Statements   February 1915-February 1915
  Folder 14: MWC Pine Burr Annual  1915

Related Collections: Ware (Dorothy P’Pool) Collection M002, Kate Seaver Downs P’Pool, and Dorothy P’Pool Ware were present at Mississippi Woman’s College during Ross’ career as a Trustee and college physician. The Johnson Papers may have similar documents regarding the construction, development, and interworkings of the Board of Trustees. “The History of William Carey” found on WCU’s Online Archives page also describes how the school was founded as well as how the W.S.F Tatum is related to the University. The Hill Collection contains a newspaper clipping regarding the closing of Mississippi Woman’s College during the 1930’s.

Subject Headings:

Preferred Citation:
Administrative Information:

Access Restrictions:

The collection is open for research. Arrangements for viewing the collection must be made in advance by contacting the office of the Director of Libraries at William Carey University.

Restrictions on use and Copyright

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Provenance: This collection was acquired by Dr. Tommy King via a family member of the Ross family. The collection was then given to WCU Libraries for processing.