

Daniel Augustus Tompkins Papers

Biography

Daniel Augustus Tompkins was born on October 12, 1851 in Edgefield County, South Carolina to DeWitt Clinton and Hannah Virginia Smyly Tompkins. He attended local schools as well as the Edgefield Academy before entering the University of South Carolina in 1867. Tompkins transferred to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York in 1869. During the summers he worked for Alexander Lyman Holley as a draftsman in the Troy steel works of John A. Griswold and Company.

Tompkins graduated with a civil engineering degree in 1873 and immediately began working for Holley in New York City. Eventually Holley sent the young Tompkins to learn the craft of a machinists. Within five years, the latter was a master machinist having trained under John Fritz at the Bethlehem Iron Works. It was Fritz who arranged for Tompkins to supervise the installation of a hoop mill at the Schwerte Iron Works in Westphalia, Germany. By 1879, Tompkins returned to work as a draftsman at the Bethlehem Iron Works. In 1881, he moved to Crystal City, Missouri and worked as a master machinist for the Crystal Plate Glass Company.

Two years later in March of 1883, Tompkins moved to Charlotte, North Carolina as an agent for the Westinghouse Machine Company. He installed and received commissions for steam engines. This arrangement led to the creation of the D.A. Tompkins Company in partnership with R.M. Miller, Senior. The two men organized the Southern Cotton Oil Company in Charlotte and by 1887 they had built eight mills. That same year, Miller and Tompkins dissolved their partnership. However, Tompkins was just getting started. He incorporated the D.A. Tompkins Company and served as its major shareholder and chief engineer. 1910 involved the company involved with the construction of 250 cotton oil mills, 150 electric plants and 100 cotton mills. Tompkins owned outright Atherton Mill in Charlotte's Dilworth neighborhood, High Shoals Mills in Gaston County and Edgefield Manufacturing Company in Edgefield, South Carolina.

Tompkins success led to a presidential appointment by William McKinley to the US Industrial Commission in 1899. One year later he joined the National Association of Manufacturers. Tompkins led a successful campaign to establish North Carolina State University as well as a number of textile schools at Clemson University, Mississippi and Texas.

Charlotte was on the move when Tompkins began his career in the Queen City. He became involved in the Charlotte Manufacturer's Club (a private men's club) and the local Democratic Party. Tompkins owned controlling interest in three newspapers, including the Charlotte *Daily Observer*, the Charlotte *Evening News* and Greenville, South Carolina, *News*. He owned the Observer Printing House and laid claim to being the author to numerous books and pamphlets. However, historians learned that Tompkins hired ghostwriters such as Charles Lee Coon, Alexander J. McKelway and Bruce Craven to produce his histories of Mecklenburg County and books on the textile industry.

Through his newspapers and publishing firm, Tompkins had a private outlet to voice his opinions regarding the developing social and economic trends in North Carolina. He opposed compulsory public education, child labor legislation, wage /hour regulations and restricted immigration. In other words, Tompkins did not want any legal interference that prevented his mills from profiting from the abundance of cheap labor and underage workers.

Although successful in his professional life, his private life seems to have been that of a solitary figure. His fiancée died in 1884 and apparently Tompkins let his work become his life. By 1912, his health declined to the extent that he retired to his summer home in Montreat, North Carolina. Tompkins died of a stroke on October 18, 1914 in Montreat, and he is buried in Elmwood Cemetery.

The Daniel Augustus Tompkins Papers
c 1870 to 1974

This collection of correspondence, cotton industry booklets, drawings, photographs and articles comprise five boxes of material. The items were donated to the library by Tompkins. Duke University has a collection of over 5,000 of Tompkins Papers and the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill also has a substantial collection of his papers.

Daniel Augustus Tompkins Papers

Box 1

TO1:1/1	Hapgood Plow Company, No. 4 General Catalog (1897-1898)
TO1:1/2	Eagle Cotton Gin Company, Bridgewater, Maine (1897-1898)
TO1:1/3	Eagle Cotton Gin Company, Supplementary Catalog (1897-98)
TO1:1/4	American Harrow Company. Detroit, Michigan (1897-1898)
TO1:1/5	B.F. Harrow & Sons: Plow & Cultivating Implements Louisville, Kentucky (1897-1898)
TO1:1/6	P.K Dederick's Sons. Albany, New York (1900)
TO1:1/7	Winshpa Machine Company. Atlanta, Georgia (1898)
TO1:1/8	Lidell Company. Charlotte, North Carolina
TO1:1/9	Northington-Munger Pratt Company. Birmingham, Alabama. (1895)
TO1:2	Single Catalog Covers: Interiors Missing
TO1:2/1	Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing. Charlotte, NC
TO1:2/2	Rawlings Implements. Baltimore, Maryland
TO1:3/1	"The Round Bales System" American Cotton Co. New York
TO1:3/2	Preliminary Study of Cotton Ginning Costs in North Carolina (June 1942)
TO1:3/3	The Besonette System. The Ginner's Compress Company. Dearborn, Michigan.
TO1:3/4	The Webb Steam Lever Compress. Webb Paper Company. Minnden, Louisiana.
TO1:3/5	Webb Steam Lever Company. Webb Paper Company. Minnden, Louisiana.
TO1:3/6	Stilwell-Bierce and Smith Vaile Company. Dayton, Ohio.
TO1:3/7	Cotton. Charles W. Lee & Company. Cotton Brokers, 1900.
TO1:3/8	Newton's Practical Spinner, 1886

Box 2

Includes pamphlets written by or about D. A. Tompkins.

TO2:1	check on
TO2:2	Tompkins, D.A. "Ginneries"
TO2:3	Tompkins, D.A. "Fourth of July at Gastonia," 1902
TO2:4	Tompkins, D.A. "Building and Loan Associates," 1910
TO2:5	Tompkins, D.A. "Cotton as a Factor in Progress," May 1893 (Reprint from <i>Engineering Magazine</i>)
TO2:6	Tompkins, D.A. "Cotton Seed and Its Products." 1900
TO2:7	Tompkins, D.A. "Untitled report on Olive Trees, unknown.
TO2:8	Tompkins, D.A. Cotton Mills: An Adress: Reprint from the <i>Atlantic Constitution</i> .
TO2:9	Tompkins, D.A. Cultivation, Picking, Baling and Manufacturing of

TO1:10 Tompkins, D.A. Cotton, 1895.
"Currency Reform: Needs of the South." Reprint
from the Baltimore Manufacturers Record, 1897.

Daniel Augustus Tompkins Papers

TO2:11 Tompkins. D.A. The D.A. Tompkins Company of Charlotte, North
Carolina: The Scope and Character of Its Work,
1895.

TO2:12 Tompkins, D. A. Nursing and Nurses, 1909.

TO2:13 Tompkins, D.A. A Plan To Raise Capital for Manufacturing, 1894.

TO2:14 Tompkins, D.A. A plan to Rasie Capital for Manufacturing, 1899.

TO2:15 Tompkins, D.A. Road Building and Broad Trees, 1901.

TO2:16 Tompkins, D.A. Roaring River Damask Mill, 1905.

TO2:17 Tompkins, D.A. Water Power on the Catawba River, 1902.