Depression news turned a little more promising early in 1934. On January 2 the federal Civil Works Administration (CWA) said it would take on Tippecanoe County projects that would create jobs for more than 1,500 men by April. The CWA would help develop more than 200 acres that Dave Ross had given or helped Purdue acquire for its airport. The work would include grading, putting in water lines and lights, and building a hard runway. Six-year-old Shambaugh Field, on its eighty acres in southeast Lafayette, would by agreement close. Purdue was getting ready to hire the Shambaugh manager and aviation instructor “Cap” Aretz to take charge at Purdue’s airport.

The 1934 news turned unbelievable, too, on the night of February 24. It happened during a bridge game in the Delta Sigma Lambda fraternity house at 359 Vine Street in West Lafayette. Against odds said to have been 52 million to one, the dealer distributed thirteen hearts to Purdue junior George Wilcox, a “Delt” from Bradford, Pennsylvania. Wilcox bid seven hearts; his opponents doubled; Wilcox redoubled, laid down his hand, and scored 643 points.

The men running Rostone Corporation had no such luck. They tried to line up licensees to build homes using their synthetic stone. Their Century of Progress house had attracted architects, builders, retailers, and the general public. Sears, Roebuck and Company ar-
ranged to distribute and sell Rostone’s stone-like material, as well as a company-designed steel frame for the homes. The Martin-Perry Corporation of York, Pennsylvania, agreed to make the frames for Sears. Sears also built and agreed to maintain a model home at the Century of Progress using Rostone. Sears further arranged to let a Rostone man meet visitors at the model home and demonstrate and promote the products Sears hoped to sell. Rostone hired Purdue mechanical engineering graduates Maurice Knoy and David W. Slipher to be the Rostone reps in the show home.

Rostone meanwhile had been quietly working since 1931 on a project to make building bricks out of flue dust also known as “fly ash.” At one point during 1931, Rostone and a Chicago area partner had almost agreed to create a holding company to make the bricks. To improve the quality and size of its stone slabs, Rostone bought the old J. Horat Machinery Company building on South Earl Avenue in Lafayette and moved manufacturing to it from Riverside. Rostone bought a bigger hydraulic press, too, and a larger steam autoclave.

To avoid any legal problems with licensee holding companies Dave Ross convinced Harrison and a local contractor, Karl Kettelhut, to form the R-H-K (Ross-Harrison-Kettelhut) Corporation. Founded on April 21, 1934, R-H-K was Ross’s fourth business venture (after Ross Gear in 1906, Fairfield in 1919, and Rostone in 1927). R-H-K’s purpose was to make and sell the Rostone imitation stone. This allowed Rostone, the company, to return to its primary function, the research of building materials.

For Dave Ross, the affairs at Ross Gear gave him fewer headaches. In 1934, the company introduced a twin-lever gear, the invention of employee Percy “Alex” Newman. By the end of 1934, Ross Gear still retained a treasury surplus of nearly $337,000 (The Gear, 13).
Federal remedies aside, joblessness was so rampant that in the primary elections on May 8, 1934, a staggering 485 people, mostly out-of-work men, filed as candidates for nominations for public offices.

At the Founder’s Day program at Purdue in May, George Ade responded to a request to be one of its speakers. He chose to accentuate the positive:

All sorts of universities turn out all sorts of unexpected graduates. Purdue is a school of technology. Yet it has produced the dean of American letters [Booth Tarkington], the world’s foremost authority on the printing and binding of beautiful books [Bruce Rogers], and John McCutcheon, who is America’s greatest combination of world traveler, cartoonist and war correspondent. (McCutcheon, Jr., John T., 5-6)

On June 24, Ade composed an interesting political letter to Will Hays (1879-1954.) A native of Sullivan, Indiana, Hays led Republican Warren G. Harding’s campaign for U.S. President in 1920 and served as Harding’s Postmaster General. Hollywood movie studios hired Hays in 1922 as first president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America until he retired in 1945. In his letter to Hays Ade mentioned, among other things:

We are between the devil and the deep blue sea out here in Indiana. The Republicans have nominated for Senator, to succeed himself, that oleaginous and unspeakable tadpole, Arthur Robinson. It will be a crime against the state if we return to the Senate a chattering demigogue [sic] who has earned the contempt of all the other senators. The Democrats have put every independent voter on the spot by nominating [Sherman] Minton at the dictation of Paul McNutt. Unless you have been in the state during the past year you cannot understand how general and deep-seated is the resentment against McNutt. He has turned the appointive power over to a lot of second-story men and door mat thieves and the result has been a slaughter reminding one of the Custer massacre or the Spanish Inquisition. We find an army of Republicans in angry revolt against Robinson. We find an army of Democrats...
open mutiny against McNutt. Party lines will be shot all to pieces. (Tobin, 184-185)

Three days later, Ade wrote about the movies in a letter to his actor friend Charles J. Winninger:

You have been my favorite actor ever since Edwin Booth died and I caught you in the parade at Eau Claire.

The sad facts in regard to The County Chairman are that M.G.M. bought the talking rights and recently sold them to Fox. I understand that Fox had Will Rogers in mind for the title role but I do not believe that they have any definite plans regarding the piece. This is all too bad as the part would fit you and you could play it as well as you do your trombone...

I have so many dates with women, being booked weeks ahead, that I find it almost impossible to escape them...Not long ago a tormenting old lady asked me, “Why did you never get married?” I don’t know whether [the line] is mine, or whether I remembered it, but I said, “Because her father didn’t own a shot gun.” Go ahead and put that into the Maxwell House Coffee release for the family trade. We get you on the air every week and we long for television so that we can get a peek at your smiling mug. (Tobin, 186)

Meanwhile, in his screen writing labors, Ade tailored the lead in The Hero of Eagle Creek for Will Rogers. However, the entire project had to be shelved because Rogers died in an airplane crash on August 15, 1935.
Maybe the all-out push for research at Purdue—spurred by hard drivers like Dave Ross and the prompt success of PRF—did at times go a little too far. In the summer heat of July 2, 1934, the Journal and Courier told of a Purdue man making a “wrist air conditioner.” It could cool one’s blood with a dry-ice pellet, but that little idea went nowhere.

That summer, between July 20 and August 10, record-setting heat battered the Midwest. At Purdue, temperatures reached 108 on July 20, the highest in fifty-four years of record keeping. The heat inched on up to 110 on July 23 and July 25. Out in the open sun, some said a thermometer would measure 146.

On Tuesday afternoon, September 4, the U.S. Bureau of Air Commerce telegraphed all American airports and airlines that Shambaugh Airport had closed and Purdue University Airport had opened. Purdue featured twenty-four-hour service, boundary and obstruction lights, and a seventy-five-foot beacon, its rotating yellow ray swinging around and lighting the night skies. It was the tallest beacon between Chicago and Indianapolis. Aretz and student pilot Charles Daudt flew five privately owned airplanes housed in the Shambaugh Airport shanties over to Purdue. There a fireproof hangar and modern brick offices with classrooms awaited.

The Journal and Courier reported:

The new Purdue field which is to be operated by the university in cooperation with the Purdue Research Foundation has been approved as an emergency landing field on the Chicago-Cincinnati route by the Bureau of Air Commerce. It covers 224 acres a short distance west of West Lafayette and is capable of handling any modern aircraft, either heavier or lighter than air, now in operation. It is equipped with the latest type of approved markers. Landing floodlights are to be installed soon.
Complete service for transient planes is available, according to Captain Aretz, and men are to be on duty at the port 24 hours a day.

Now Tippecanoe County could boast of three airfields. Frank Reimers operated a private one just south of Lafayette. Another was gaining use to the east. There the brothers Joe, Francis, and John Halsmer had, in 1931, bought a dismantled “Jenny” stored in a farmer’s barn in Illinois. They had swapped forty bushels of their dad’s corn for it, and they had driven the Jenny in pieces home in a truck. By 1934, the Halsmers operated their own private airfield on forty acres across from the family dairy farm in Perry Township. Their efforts evolved into the public Halsmer Flying Service that operated until 1988.

During 1934, Amelia Earhart won the Harmon Trophy for the third straight year. But more importantly, she met President Elliott at a luncheon. The event that brought them together was the fourth annual Women’s Conference on Current Problems sponsored by the New York Herald Tribune. Both were speakers, her subject being the future of aviation and the roles of women in that future. She so impressed Elliott with her talk and positive attitude toward careers for women that he asked her to visit Purdue and lecture women students (Lovell, 220).

Within an hour after hearing the proposal from Elliott, Earhart re-arranged her schedule to make the visit. In less than a month she came to the campus to speak about “Opportunities for Women in Aviation.” She returned to Purdue in 1935 to discuss with Elliott just what faculty status she was to have (Topping, 234).

At about the same time, Elliott was selling Dr. Lillian M. Gilbreth, a noted industrial engineer, author, and widowed mother of twelve, on coming to Purdue as well. The author of Cheaper by the Dozen and wife of an industrial engineer, the late Frank Gilbreth, she continued his work on time-and-motion studies and job efficiency. Her deal at Purdue was like Earhart’s. Under her agreement Dr. Gilbreth was to be a “visiting professor” of industrial engineering. She would spend four or five two-week periods on
campus to lecture and consult with engineering students. Dr. Gilbreth remained on this schedule until retirement in 1948, but she visited on occasion through the 1960s (Topping, 235-236).

Noble Kizer’s 1934 football team won five, lost three. In Ross-Ade Stadium the players lost fourteen to nothing to Rice Institute; they beat Wisconsin fourteen to nothing before 18,000; then they lost the Old Oaken Bucket to Indiana seventeen to six with a near capacity crowd of 24,000 watching.

By mid-December 1934, Dave Ross had collected five more patents. They showed his increased interest in housing and traffic management. They covered his designs for a window sash, window and home construction, weatherstripping, and an improved type of road marker.

Ross also became active in the Farm Chemurgic Council as a Vice President and member of its first Board of Governors representing Indiana industry. In a general way, this Council tried, by using chemistry, to create new markets for farm products or by-products such as cornstalks or manure. The advent of soybeans as a viable cash crop is another example of its progress. There were, of course, detractors. Certain farmers irritated Ross when they remained set in their ways, causing him to complain: “There’s nothing wrong with modern farming, but plenty wrong with farmers” (Kelly, Ross, 168).