

Honoring Those Who Served: Citizen Archivists Documenting the Great War

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and
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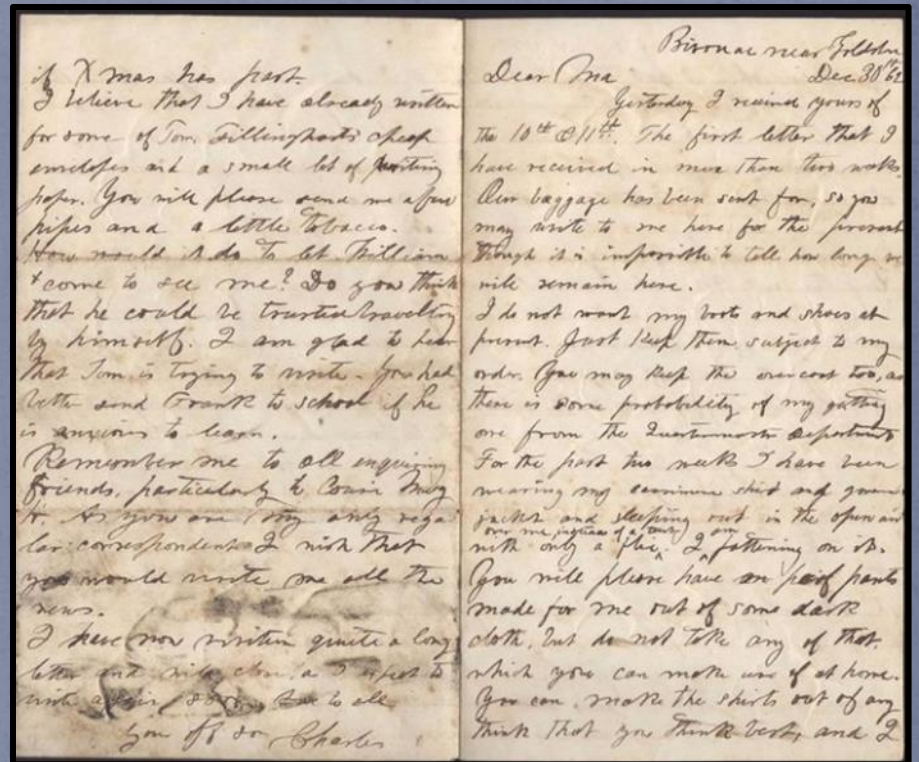
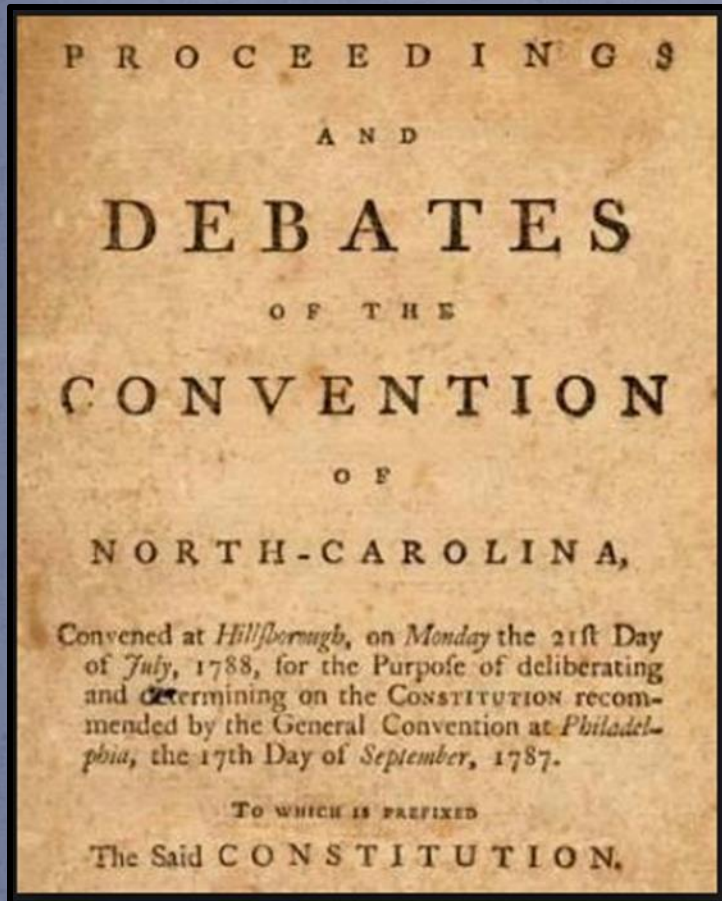


US Declares War - April 6, 1917

- Upon entering the Great War, the US found itself ill-equipped to fight and document an overseas conflict.
- Recordkeeping strategies varied from state to state and were often reacting to poor documentation from the American Revolution and the Civil War.
- Within weeks of Wilson's declaration of war, the North Carolina's Historical Commission began to actively collect unofficial documents relating to homefront mobilization.



The Impetus to Collect?



Chain of Command - Prewar

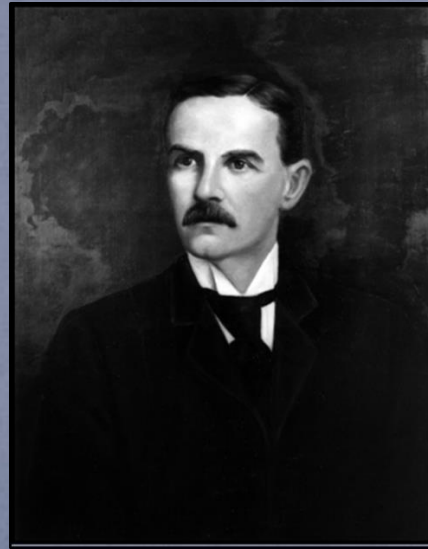
North Carolina Historical Commission

*Secretary
Chair, History Committee
*Council of NC Defense History
Committee Chair



D. W. Connor

*Member
*Chair of the NC
Council of Defense



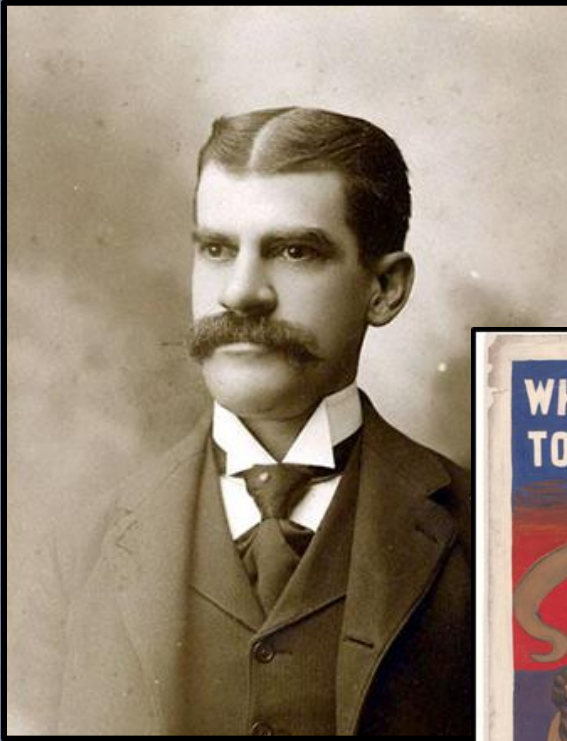
D. H. Hill

*Hall of History



F. A. Olds

Frederick Olds and the Hall of History



Plan of Action – Post War Documentation

North Carolina Historical Commission



R. B. House
Collector of War Records

Plan of Action – Post War Documentation

North Carolina Historical Commission



R. B. House
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Hall of History
F. A. Olds

Plan of Action – Post War Documentation

North Carolina Historical Commission



R. B. House, Collector of War Records



County Historians/Archivists
White and African American Representatives



Government
Organizations



Service
Groups



Women



African
Americans



Veterans



Religious
Groups



Aid
Organizations

“Every Scrap of Material”

- After the Armistice in 1918, the North Carolina state legislature created the position of “Collector of War Records” that relied on a network of “citizen volunteers” to broaden the reach of the project.
- Citizens were charged with gathering “every scrap of material” related to the Great War.
- House attempted to educate the people of North Carolina the importance of preserving their wartime participation.
- There was a specific push to chronicle the collect material that illustrated “the spirit of the people and their contributions to the cause.”
- “I have the formal reports, I want color and North Carolina character.” He sought not only the soldiers but also every community’s “quiet hero.”



Reaching Out to Underrepresented Populations

- House contacted “citizen archivists” from each county to head regional efforts in gathering war efforts, instructing them in basic methods.
- Both Connor and House were committed to an inclusive approach to outreach, cutting across gender, racial, and religious lines, actively seeking material, and assistance from women, African Americans, and Jews, to provide a more detailed understanding of North Carolina’s participation during the War.



Positive:

- Significant strides with war time documentation, with one centralized office
- Set the stage for further collection opportunities
- Shaped a more inclusive approach to documenting underrepresented populations
- Created an effective model for chronicling America's participation in World War II



Results

Negative:

- Participation by citizen archivists “spasmodic and ineffective” producing uneven results
- Overburdened by administrative obligations – it was difficult to venture out into the field to meet with collectors and donors
- Was not able to write the official history of North Carolina’s participation in the Great War



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- House, Image courtesy of the Digital North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives, UNC Libraries. Available from http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/dig_nccpa/id/3664/rec/83 (accessed June 17, 2013).
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