

A.C. Reynolds Letter to the “Reynolds Clan”

August 14, 1948

Hunter Library MSS 80-59.1-1

Transcribed and Edited by
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Introduction to the Series

This transcription and its attendant annotations, explanatory material, and bibliography were prepared by students in ENGL 618: Research Methods in English, the required gateway class for the MA in English at Western Carolina University. The learning outcomes for this class include the following:

1. Conduct appropriate, effective, and ethical scholarship
 1. Effectively find and use advanced research tools (handbooks, databases, guides, bibliographies, etc.) appropriate to a subject.
 - Students will be able to use a wide variety of such tools and evaluate those tools.
 2. Find appropriate advanced research (print and electronic scholarship) and apply that research to specific disciplinary questions or issues.
 - Students will be able to find a variety of scholarship, evaluate both the appropriateness and rigor of that scholarship, and incorporate that scholarship correctly and effectively.
 3. Develop accurate bibliographies and reference citations.
 - Students will be able to annotate, abstract, and cite materials following standard MLA format.
2. Understand the process by which the texts we use are made available.
 - Students will be able to conduct basic editorial work and evaluate the editorial work of others.

All work is presented as submitted by the students. While these students take great care with their transcriptions and annotations, errors are always possible. As these students learn throughout this class, good scholarship requires checking of sources and corroboration by authoritative sources.

It is hoped that the transcription and annotation of WCU Special Collections materials will be useful to the institution, students, scholars, and other patrons and users of WCU's Special Collections materials.

Introduction

This edition is created from the manuscript of a letter written by Alonzo Carlton Reynolds to twenty-seven of his family members on August 14, 1948. He describes a residence that he has acquired as a final resting place for him and his wife, Nannie. He provides details of the landscape and the work that has been done to prepare it for his family. He also lists some of the various wildlife found on his property. He closes with an invitation to his family to join him and Nannie for a celebration of their 50th wedding anniversary.

Alonzo Carlton Reynolds, better known as A.C. Reynolds, was born on October 19, 1870 in the Sandy Mush township, a rural community of Buncombe County. The fifth child of seven by John Haskew Reynolds and Sara Ann Ferguson Reynolds, A.C. learned about responsibility with his brothers and sisters by completing daily chores on the family farm and getting an education that started at the Sandy Mush Brick Church School. He would begin a career in education by becoming a teacher starting at the age of eighteen. He would go on to work at George Peabody College, become the President of Rutherford College, and the President of Cullowhee Normal and Industrial School, now known as Western Carolina University. Before ending his educational career, he had held the position of Superintendent of Buncombe County Schools twice! His educational vision included improvements to school facilities, higher teaching standards, and expanding the school curriculum to include new methods of teaching. He also worked for the inclusion of equal opportunities for all students and better schools for all races.

Reynolds would become an important figure in education in Western North Carolina for more than 50 years. An abundance of information is known about his educational experiences and achievements, however, his background as an avid naturalist should also be noted. He was known to regularly take his family on summer camping trips to Whiteside Mountains where “two covered wagons pulled by mules carried the provisions, babies, and...they spent two weeks living in large tents and sleeping on balsam boughs” (*Heritage of Old Buncombe County*, 310). Through this letter the reader finds information about agricultural practices of post WWII residents of McDowell County, examples of wildlife commonly found in the rural country of

Western North Carolina, and a brief biographical sketch of a notable figure in Western North Carolina's history. Elizabeth Gray Parker and Thomas Reynolds write that "Throughout his life he kept alive the spirit of pioneer living, a respect for that land and dedication to hard work that he learned from his parents" (*The Heritage of Old Buncombe County*, 310).

Editorial Statement

This edition of A.C. Reynold's letter to his family was written using a diplomatic format. The text has been transcribed, to the best of my ability, to retain its authenticity and to replicate the original appearance of the letter. This edition uses page breaks in between each page of the manuscript. Footnotes have been included for each page to allow important background information to be accessed easily by the reader.

This hand-written letter from Alonzo Carlton Reynolds is a total of 3 pages long. Its dimensions are 9 inches long and 5 7/8 inches wide. The letter is written on the front and back on unlined sheets of paper that are of medium thickness. It has been folded 3 times most likely to fit an envelope (not included in the manuscript). The letter has been written using a black felt tipped pen that shows through minimally on the alternate side of the page. There are two stains on the page, one is near the greeting of the letter and is of a tan color while the other is located at the bottom of the page and appears to be moisture of some kind. The stains are noticed on each page of the letter.

The handwriting of this letter is cursive, and the penmanship shows that the writer was educated in cursive writing and that it was produced by an older, more practiced hand. The characteristics of the writing show a relatively smooth hand with some shaking throughout. There were minimal mistakes made during writing.

Within the letter there are insertions that are denoted in the transcriptions with a symbol that looks like this (^) showing that there is something above the original line of text and a symbol like this (v) showing that the insertion has ended. There is one instance in the letter in

which the writer wrote two words and then wrote a line through the middle of them to strike it out. This is denoted in the transcription as two words with a strike through them.

Transcription
[MS page 1]

Reynwoods¹
Old Fort, N.C.²
August 14, 1948

To the other Twenty-seven
members of the Reynolds
clans,³

About forty years ago
I began to plan for a
suitable \wedge place⁴ \vee for Nannie⁵
and me to spend our
last days on the earth.
As a preparation for
that time we purchased
714 acres of rough moun-
tain land⁶ with plenty
of squirrels, ground hogs,
copperheads and rattlesnakes
and some coons,⁷ wild cats,⁸

¹ In a letter written by A.C. Reynolds entitled "Christmas at 'Reynwoods' 1947" he tells a story of his wife, Nannie, and their grandchildren at Christmas. The name "Reynwoods" is given to the estate in which they lived after 1942 until Reynolds was forced to leave due to his declining health (Reynolds, Hunter Library MSS 80-59.1-5).

² In the *History of McDowell County*, Fossett states that the origin of the city. "Old Fort...has been known by four different names; (1) Davidson's Fort, named for Samuel Davidson, an early pioneer who owned land and operated a mill; (2) Upper Fort, evidently for the purpose of distinguishing it from Cathey's Fort and the fort at Pleasant Gardens; (3) Catawba Fort, named for the Catawba Indian tribe; (4) Old Fort, its present name (47)."

³ According to the *OED Online*, *clan*, n. means "A number of persons claiming descent from a common ancestor, and associated together; a tribe."

⁴ "Grandfather loved the mountain countryside, and his dream was to retire to a piece of land he owned in McDowell County with timber, several creeks, an orchard, a garden to hoe, and a view of the mountains from his front porch" (Parker and Reynolds, p.310).

⁵ "In 1899 he married Nannie Elizabeth Woods (1874-1968) of Orange County. She was also a teacher, and following their marriage, she worked with him" (Parker and Reynolds, p.310).

⁶ Purchased according to a McDowell County deed dated from the 29th of May, 1931. "...formerly owned by John Garrison and Mrs. A.G. Hadley and sold by Mrs. Hadley to A.C. Reynolds and R.J. Tighe as is shown in Record of Deeds, Book 47 page 245 also the...tract sold by George W. Justice to R.J. Tighe and A.C. Reynolds as show in record of Deeds Book 49 page 92" (McDowell County deeds).

⁷ According to the *OED Online*, "Etymology: A familiar abbreviation of raccoon n., a carnivorous animal of North America."

⁸ Probably referencing a "bobcat." In North Carolina, the bobcat can be found in all regions of the state (*NCpedia*).

pheasants, and one bear.
Five hundred apple trees
Were planted ^ in 1908 v and well
taken care of till 1920.
In 1928 the orchard was
more and more neglected,
so that in 1942 when
we retired⁹ from regular
school work there was
not much to harvest
but wood chucks and
snakes.
Such a harvest has been
every year abundant.
Tom¹⁰ has brought in
two large copperheads and
one 39-inch rattler and I
have to my credit one ^ ground v hog
and a 42-inch rattle snake.

⁹ “In 1942 A.C. Reynolds retired from his career as an educator and lived in his mountain cabin until ill health forced him to move to a home in Arden, N.C. where he stayed until his death in 1953” (Parker and Reynolds, p.310).

¹⁰ Thomas Davies Reynolds, born 1919 to A.C. Reynolds and Nannie Reynolds. He would have been 29 years old at the time this letter was written. Per the 1940 United States Census, Thomas D. Reynolds was living in the same household as his father (United States Census, 1940).

With much vigor Tom
and Frank¹¹ have cleared
away the growth that
choked the apple trees¹² and
have sowed Austrian
winter peas¹³.

With one of the best women
as my companion, and
the mother of our nine
children, I am hoping
to celebrate our golden
wedding anniversary,
on August the ninth,
1949.

Let us then get ~~our clan~~
our clan together and
make Reynwoods the hap-
piest place on earth.

Love to all,
Father

¹¹ Frances (Frank) Coleman Cowan, born to Mary Woods Reynolds Cowan and James Donald Cowan on July 26, 1921. He would have been 27 years old at the time this letter was written (Cowan, p.181).

¹² No matter what variety of apple tree was being grown in the orchard, "Summer rots are the most serious disease problems and can destroy an entire crop. No varieties are resistant to apple scab, powdery mildew, cedar apple rust, or fire blight" (Basinger et. al, Table 2).

¹³ Winter peas are "a legume, similar to soybeans" that can be used to feed livestock (Hart, p.7).

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