

**Frances Owens**

**to**

**Samuel Robert Owens**

**January 10, 1942**

**Hunter Library MS 16.05-1-3-002**

**Transcribed and Edited by Charlie Worsham**

**For ENGL 618: Research Methods in English**

**Instructor and General Editor: Dr. Brian Gastle**

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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
  - a. 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.
  - b. 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.
  - c. 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**

The following is a letter from Frances Elvira Alexander Owens (1879–1965) of Webster, NC, to her son, Samuel Owens (1918–1995), who was then serving in the U.S. Navy. At the time of the letter’s original posting, Samuel Owens was aboard a submarine tender, the USS Canopus. When the U.S. entered WWII, the Canopus was stationed in Manila Bay. On December 29, 1941, a Japanese bomb penetrated several decks of the ship and exploded on the propeller shaft, rendering the Canopus immobile. The crew abandoned the ship during the day, using ropes to rig the ship askance until nightfall so that it appeared to the Japanese to be derelict. The Canopus serviced its last submarine the week of April 1 (USS Canopus Part I). On April 9, 1941, the ship was scuttled, or intentionally sunk, to keep its valuable equipment out of enemy hands (USS Canopus Part II).

When the island of Corregidor fell, Owens, along with around 400 other Prisoners of War, was captured by the Japanese and taken to the island of Palawan to make an airfield. When the airstrip was finished, Owens was sent to Manila and then Japan, where he was put to work in the coal mines. In 1945, Owens was being held roughly 20 miles from Nagasaki when the U.S. dropped the atomic bomb. The prisoners could not see or hear the blast, but Owens said, “We knew something had happened because the Americans had stopped bombing” (“Local Man Recalls His Experiences as a P.O.W.”). Owens was released in October of 1945, at which time he wired his mother to say, “DEAR MOTHER ON WAY HOME” (Danfield).

In the interest of maintaining a diplomatic edition, we have taken pains to preserve original spellings and typographical errors. Certain words have been annotated for clarity, particularly those of the Appalachian dialect.

Webster, N.C. Jan 10—

My Dearest Son Sammie Boy—

here is another letter to you hoping you will get some of the many I have written to you and no answer. I do hope you are all right. I got your wire<sup>1</sup> rite after the war begins<sup>2</sup>, telling me you were all right, and I have looked and looked for a letter but up to now it was all in vain. I have got sevrel from Frank<sup>3</sup> got one yesterday, and it came in 4 days. so why can't I get one from you if you. if you are able to write and this letter please write to me I want to hear from you so bad and thank you for makeing out the alotment a gain we sure needed it. Frank said you and him planed to come home together soon as every thing gets settled and the war is over and I hope and pray it won't take long. Mr Johnson Buchanan was driving Johneys car and he was coming home in almost in sight missed the road and ran off the high bank rite into the river in the [town?] hole. it was a two or three hours before they could get him and the car out of the watter. that was last tuesday the 6— it sure was anoufle<sup>4</sup> pitiful thing for him and them all Please writ soon as you get this if you can. I do want to hear from you so bad I am praying for you and all the Boys and for victory and peace to come soon. I love you all ways Mother Dad and Nell<sup>5</sup>—

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<sup>1</sup> See Owens, Samuel Robert Rickman. "To Frances Elvira Alexander Owens." 18 Dec. 1941. MS 16-05.1.02.001. Hunter Library, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC.

<sup>2</sup> When the war started, the Canopus was in Manila Bay. On December 29, 1941, the ship was taken out of commission by a Japanese bomb that penetrated multiple decks and exploded on the propeller shaft (USS Canopus Part I).

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Owens' brother, Frank Jurdan Owens, 1905–1944 (Bureau of the Census).

<sup>4</sup> "An awful"

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Owens' sister, Nell Frances Owens Edwards, 1921–2000 (Bureau of the Census).

[FRONT OF ENVELOPE]

Mrs. S.J. Owens  
Webster, NC

SPEEDED TO YOU  
VIA AIR MAIL  
REPLY BY AIR MAIL

AIR MAIL 6 CENTS  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

WEBSTER  
JAN  
10  
5 PM  
1942

Sam R. Owens  
U.S.S. Canopus #6  
c/o Post Master  
San Francisco, Cal.

RETURN TO SENDER  
BY ORDER OF NAVY DEPT.  
NO POSTAGE DUE.

[BACK OF ENVELOPE]

WEBSTER  
AUG  
31  
1 PM  
1942  
NC