

Ida J. Smith to Dan Tompkins from

January 24, 1947

Hunter Library MSS 80-14

Transcribed and Edited by:

Jessica Masters

For ENGL 618: Research Methods in English

Western Carolina University

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

This letter was written by Ida Jane Smith in January 1947. Within this letter, Ida Smith discusses the salaries she received as a pioneer schoolteacher in western North Carolina. The text of the letter recognizes that this letter may have been a part of a series of correspondences between Ida Smith and Dan Tompkins. After listing her salaries at various positions in different counties and schools, she continues to note that it has been difficult to gather all of the materials together she had been asked for. At the time that this letter was written, Ida Smith was nearly 74 years old.

Ida Jane Smith was born in 1873 to Lewis J. Smith and Clarissa Almira Coward in East La Porte, North Carolina. Her family were strong believers and supporters of education and sought ways for their children to be educated. Ida Smith's parents first supported the East La Porte school where Ida attended and then later donated land to the Public School Committee where the "Liberty School" was built. Eventually Ida attended school where Robert Lee Madison, the founder of Cullowhee High School (later Western Carolina University) was principal. Ida continued her studies at Cullowhee High School where she and her siblings were among its first graduates. After graduating, Ida taught school for a while, operated a general store, then returned to teaching. She is described as highly regarded.

Dan Tompkins, to whom the letter is addressed, was a newspaper editor, WWI veteran, and congressman. Born in Webster, N.C. in 1870, Dan Tompkins is often considered a self-taught man despite graduating high school and attending college at Wake Forest College. By 1912, Dan Tompkins had become the editor of the *Jackson County Journal* which had been established

six years prior. He later volunteered for military service in 1917 where he became Sergeant. When he returned, Dan Tompkins continued to be editor of the *Jackson Journal* until its end. Dan Tompkins was not only editor of one of the major publications in Jackson County, he also served as mayor, a representative to the General Assembly, and president of the Sylva Chamber of Commerce. Dan Tompkins was a supporter of education. He listed education of children as one of his missions. He urged for longer school terms and supported bills for education of children of poorer counties. Dan Tompkins was also known as a supporter of Western Carolina Teacher's College. In 1947, the date of Ida Smith's letter, Dan Tompkins was a member of the House of Representatives.

### **Editorial Statement**

This letter was available in the Dan Tompkins folder through the Hunter Library Special and Digital Collections. Contained in the folder is two pages of the letter. Originally, the two pages of the letter were separated, the first being filed by date, and the second in a miscellaneous folder. The first page was discovered when looking for additional letters from Ida J. Smith. The letter is handwritten on sturdy stationary paper. Ida Smith has some distinguishing features in her penmanship which include an indentation to begin a new paragraph, periods and commas are often used interchangeably, the letter *t* is crossed in most places after the base letter is formed.

The two pages were determined to be part of the same letter because the paper and ink, and topics matched. The two pages had the same folds in the in the pages as if part of the same letter. Each page is made of a sturdy material that has faded to yellow from age. It is creased in half and then vertically in thirds. In the creases of the page the ink has faded in some places.

Although the two pages are part of the same letter it is undetermined whether the two pages are sequential. The first page of the letter ends in a hard stop and the second page begins with a new paragraph.

The text is transcribed to recreate the appearance and presentation of Ida Smith's original letter. This is a diplomatic edition. All spelling errors and underlined words remain the same. Bracketed information indicates editorial notes. For reference, the transcript has been paginated so that the top of each page refers to the corresponding page of the text.

**Transcription**

Cullowhee, N.C.

Jan 24, '47

Hon Dan Tompkins,  
Raleigh, N.C.

Dear Dan,

Thanks so much for your letter  
which reached me yesterday. It is good to  
know you had remembered my interests

As to any work in Graham, it was at Topoco,<sup>1</sup>  
not Stecoah.<sup>2</sup>

This district was not established until the  
year after I left there. I was a "pioneer," Topoco  
was "not on the map" as far as schools were  
concerned at first. It was just an unsettled  
corner, before the Power Co. began the dam.<sup>3</sup>  
Families flocked in. In a short time it was  
seen that it was necessary to have a school, so  
without waiting for a lot of red tape, I was  
offered this job. Books (public school books) were  
furnished by this company and my salary, \$60.00,  
also, a furnished apartment, was given me.

The second year another teacher was added.

The next year, a district was given there, and

From that time on the state took over,

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<sup>1</sup> Tapoco is a community located in Graham County, NC formed with the creation of the Cheoah Dam. Originally called Cheoah, the name was changed as to avoid confusion with other community of the same name. The new name, Tapoco, was named for the Tallassee Power Company, the company in charge of building the dam. Between 1916-1919 an estimated 2,000 people lived in this community. See "History of Tapoco" by J.S. Barrett.

<sup>2</sup> Community in Graham County, NC near the Little Tennessee River.

<sup>3</sup> The construction camp at the Rhymer's Ferry dam site became a community with some houses. The Tallassee Power Company is responsible for building the Santeelah Dam.

I sent a letter to you last Tuesday, which no doubt has reached you by this time.

I forgot to say any thing about salary in my report. I received from \$40.00 to \$50.00 per month for adult teaching. When I began work at Dicks Creek I was allowed \$60.00,<sup>1</sup> I went in as a substitute. The last year I taught I received \$101, I think.

It has ^been hard to get to-gether the needed information. It seems those who could have helped one have, either died, or moved away.

It came to me this morning, that Prof. Reynolds<sup>2</sup> might help me. I think I will go to see him today. I only [illegible] terms for Cullowhee. It may be 4, I taught under him. He may remember, I can't.

Also, part of the time we were under W.P.A.,<sup>3</sup> the state paid part of our salary. I think this was in 1938 and perhaps in 1939, also, This may, or may not, mean any thing.

I wish I could recall things more clearly, but a woman almost 74, has a good excuse to

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<sup>1</sup> Dicks Creek School or Dix Creek in Jackson County N.C. Ida J. Smith was principal from 1942-1943.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Alonzo Carlton (A.C.) Reynolds, Superintendent of Buncombe County Schools was elected as Professor Robert Lee Madison's successor as president of Cullowhee Normal and Industrial School in 1912.

<sup>3</sup> Works Progress Administration, a New Deal agency to provide work for the unemployed under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

be forgetful, hasn't she.

If I get any thing that might be help ful, I will  
write. Thanking you so much,

Your friend, always, Ida J. Smith.



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