

Personal Letter from Charles A. Webb to Dan Tompkins

October 15, 1920

Hunter Library MSS 80-14

**Transcribed by: Whitney Waters
For ENGL 618: Research Methods in English
Western Carolina University
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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 letter is part of the Dan Tompkins Collection housed in the special collections library of WCU in box MSS 80-14. It was written to Dan Tompkins from Charles Webb, associate publisher of the *Citizen*, during the 1920 election in North Carolina. Tompkins was editor of the *Jackson County Journal* during this time. He also served three terms in the House of Representatives and as the Mayor of Sylva in following years (Austin).

The political figures mentioned in this letter, Cameron Morrison, Felix Alley, and Zeb Weaver, were all democratic candidates who won the North Carolina elections in 1920 (*The Asheville Citizen*). Cameron Morrison won the gubernatorial election by a landslide against republican John Parker and was inaugurated on January 12, 1921 (*The Asheville Citizen*). During his single term as governor, he instituted many changes. He endorsed the Good Roads organization, which instated the Highway Act of 1921, initiating the construction of a 5,500-mile state highway system (“North Carolina Biography”). Today he is best known as the “Good Roads Governor,” though he was also a strong supporter of educational reform movements (“North Carolina Biography”).

The election of 1920 was an important historic milestone due to the women’s suffrage movement of 1919. This political shift drew particular media attention to the women’s votes in this election. L.L. Jenkins, who is mentioned in this letter, was the republican candidate for Congress who ran against Zebulon Weaver (“County Ballot by Precincts”). Notably, Weaver was the only member of the North Carolina Delegation to vote for women’s suffrage (*Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*).

Swain, Jackson, and Macon are neighboring counties in Western North Carolina. Dan Tompkins, who was local to Sylva, covered the politics of the area not only for the *Jackson County Journal*, but also for the *Asheville Citizen*, as demonstrated in this letter.

Tompkins was a dedicated and skilled journalist who made significant improvements to the *Jackson County Journal* during his thirty-one year term as editor. Additionally, he sought to bring progress to Jackson County through his various political roles. His dream was to make Western North Carolina the “Switzerland of America” by improving roads, public facilities, and education, and creating a national park in the Smokies (Austin). During Tompkins’s editorial career, he was able to bring the *Jackson County Journal* from a four-page paper to a twelve-page paper, a feat which he accomplished in just two years. With this additional space, he was able to bring a more local-focus to the paper, as well as increase the amount of state news. Tompkins’s returned from service in WWI as a more politically-minded, public-spirited editor. He was highly concerned with inspiring the citizens of Jackson county to vote and wrote that if women voted they “could clean up politics as they do everything else” (39). His political proclivities made him an excellent reporter during the elections, which is why Webb selected him to write election coverage for the *Asheville Citizen*.

Editorial Statement

In accordance with the regulations of a diplomatic edition, this text has been transcribed to reflect the authenticity of the original document as closely as possible. Any misspellings, grammatical errors, or inconsistencies have been left unchanged. The diplomatic edition style does not interfere with the readability of the document.

The placement of the letterhead and greetings attempt to replicate those from the manuscript. This was a typewritten letter from Charles A. Webb and reflects his personal letterhead. The script following Webb’s signature was handwritten on the original document detailing the schedule and locations of Zeb Weaver’s speeches.

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CHARLES A. WEBB ¹
ASHEVILLE, N.C.

October 15th, 1920.

Mr. Dan W. Tompkins²,

Sylva, N.C.

Dear Mr. Tompkins:-

Your write ups of the speeches of Cam. Morrison³, Felix Alley⁴ and Zeb Weaver⁵ are the best political stories that have appeared in the Citizen⁶ during this campaign. Your fine write-ups of Morrison's and Alley's speeches are what prompted me to ask you to go to Andrews⁷ and report Weaver's speech and I am very much obliged to you for it.

From now on we are especially anxious to have Weaver's speeches covered in full, with all the local side-lights possible with the hope of arousing as much enthusiasm as possible, paying attention to the registration of the women's vote, and I am going to ask you to report Weaver's speeches in Swain, Jackson and Macon if you possibly can. I enclose you his itinerary, and if you can follow him into Haywood please do so. We will try to cover him in Buncombe from Asheville.

In writing these stories touch as much as possible on local conditions and democratic prospects, and where-ever you find an instance that republican women are not

¹ Charles Aurelius Webb: (1866-1949) of Asheville, N.C. was a lawyer, United States marshal, North Carolina state senator, and associate publisher of the *Asheville Citizen*. For more information, see "Charles Webb" in the *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*.

² Dan Tompkins (1890-1950) was the editor of the Jackson County Journal from 1912-1943. He later went on to serve as Mayor of Sylva, NC and a State Representative for North Carolina.

³ Cameron Morrison (1869-1953) was the North Carolina Governor from 1921-1925, U.S. Senator, and Congressman. For more information, see "Cameron Morrison" in the *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*.

⁴ Felix Alley (1873-1957) was an attorney, superior court judge, and author from Jackson County. He served as county attorney for Haywood, Jackson and Swain counties and for Waynesville. In 1933, he was appointed judge of the superior court, a post he held until his retirement in 1948. For more information, see "Felix Alley" in the *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*.

⁵ Zebulon Weaver (1872-1948) was a US Congressman from 1918-1946. Weaver was a democrat from Buncombe County. For more information, see "Zeb Weaver" in the *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*.

⁶ The *Asheville Citizen* was founded in 1870 by Randolph Abbott Shotwell. Charles A. Webb owned the paper in 1930 when it merged with the *Asheville Times* to form the *Asheville Citizen-Times*. For more information, see "Asheville Citizen-Times" in *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*.

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going to vote for Jenkins⁷ it would be well to comment upon the fact but not mention her name.

If you can not cover Weaver's speeches in Swain and Jackson please let me know.

Of course you know the Citizen will pay you whatever is right and fair for your services and, in addition, your expenses.

Sincerely yours,

Charles A. Webb

Next Monday and Tuesday- Swain County
Wednesday and Thursday- Macon "
Friday and Saturday- Jackson "

⁷ L.L Jenkins ran for election against Zebulon Weaver for Representative of the Sixty-Seventh Congress in the tenth district. ("County Ballot by Precincts," 1)

Works Cited

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Webb, Charles. Letter to Dan Tompkins. 15 October 1920. Western Carolina Digital Collections, Hunter Library MSS 80-14.

<https://wcu.lyrasistechnology.org/repositories/2/resources/348>.