

A.C. Reynolds Letter to Mary Woods Reynolds Cowan

June 20, 1950

Hunter Library MSS 80-59-01-01

Transcribed and Edited by
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For ENGL. 616: Research Methods in English
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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 his daughter Mary Woods Cowan Reynolds on June 20, 1950. He thanks her for a box of items that have been sent that may have contained clothing. He talks of Nell, a possible friend of Mary's, and taking care of her father. He discusses moving to a new residence with his wife, Nannie. He describes his day-to-day activities of holding church services, working in his garden, eating, sleeping, and reading. He speaks of the importance of prayer in his life and makes references to his religious convictions. He closes with an entreaty to his daughter and grandchildren to visit so that he can show them how much he appreciates them.

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. The letter in this manuscript shows another side of A.C. Reynolds. 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” (Old Buncombe County Heritage, 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 10 1/2 inches long and 7 inches wide. The letter is written on the front of thin unlined sheets of paper. It has been folded 4 times most likely to fit an envelope (not included in the manuscript). The letter has been written using a blue felt tipped pen that shows through minimally on the alternate side of the page. There are three small stains that discolor some of the writing in the middle portion of the letter. The stain is noticed only on the first page of the letter. There is also a black stain at the top of the second page of the letter that looks to be from the ink bleeding from the address on the first page.

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 of this letter.

Within the letter there was 1 insertion that is 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.

Transcription
[MS page 1]

Old Fort, NC¹
June 20, 1950

Dear Mary²,

I thank you for all the good things that came in the box. I have fallen heir to so much clothes that I can enjoy that it costs me but little to be comfortably clothed. Tell Nell³ that it is one of my regrets that I could not take further care of her father. It now seems that I ought to devote all my time to taking care of Nannie. We are, therefore, planning for us to move into Mr. Lance's⁴ house near Oscar's⁵ the first of next July. It is however going to take the influence of us all to keep Nannie sold on the idea.

¹ In the *History of McDowell County*, the 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).

² Mary Woods Reynolds Cowan, the first child of A.C. Reynolds and Nannie Woods Reynolds born on July 27, 1900 (Jackson County Heritage, p.181).

³ Unknown. Possibly a friend of Mary Woods Reynolds Cowan.

⁴ Unknown. Possibly a neighbor of Oscar and Ruth Tandy when they lived in Arden, NC.

⁵ Possibly Oscar G. Tandy, son-in-law. Married to Ruth Ferguson Reynolds Tandy and living in Arden, NC as per US City Directory, 1822-1995.

I thank God for this giving
ing ^ me v such good health. I
was able to hold two
church services for my
pastor Sunday. I am
also able to do two or
three hours work in
the garden each day.
The remainder of the
time I enjoy eating
sleeping and reading.
Time never gets
heavy on my friend.
One of the most refresh-
ing seasons⁶ of the day
is continuing for a
considerable time in
secret pray. When I
am tempted to let the
load⁷ overwhelm me
prayer lifts the burden at once.

⁶ *season*, n. "A time, period, occasion." *OED Online*.

⁷ *load*, n. means "That which is laid upon a person, beast, or vehicle to be carried; a burden." *OED Online*.

She⁸ has requested the
privilege of being our
burden bearer, and
happy are we who com-
ply with His request
in meeting the condi-
tion of His constant mercy.
I shall leave here a
little before the first of
July if possible to devote
all the time necessary
to taking care of Nannie⁹.
I hope to see you, Frank¹⁰,
and Anne¹¹ and tell you
in person how much
I appreciate what you
have done for us all.

Much love,
Father

⁸ Unknown.

⁹ The use of the term “taking care” in the letter seems to refer to A.C. Reynold’s devotion to his wife and family. Reynold’s wife, Nannie Reynolds died on April 15, 1968 according to Ancestry.com. With the date of this letter written 18 years prior, it is assumed that she was not ill at the time this letter was penned.

¹⁰ Frances (Frank) Coleman Cowan, born to Mary Woods Reynolds Cowan and James Donald Cowan on July 26, 1921. He would have been 29 years old at the time this letter was written (*Jackson County Heritage, North Carolina*, p.181).

¹¹ Elizabeth Anne Cowan, daughter of Mary Woods Reynolds Cowan and James Donald Cowan was born on June 8, 1926. She would have been 24 at the time this letter was written (*Jackson County Heritage, North Carolina*, p.181).

Works Cited

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