

EDWARD SCHEIDT TO DAN TOMPKINS

April 22, 1941

Hunter Library MSS 80-14 Folder 4



*Arthur Otto Weidelich and his foresting crew
in Jackson County ("Reforestation planting")*

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for ENGL 618: Research Methods in English

Western Carolina University

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SERIES INTRO

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 them 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

Dan Tompkins was born in Webster, NC in 1890. He graduated from high school in Waynesville and studied law at Wake Forest College. The Jackson County Journal started up in 1906, and Tompkins became its editor in chief in 1912. He served in the military in 1917 and 1918 during World War I, during which time he was part of the offensive that broken the Hindenburg line at Ballicourt, France (Jackson County Genealogical Society). After his honorable discharge, Tompkins returned to his job at the Journal and was elected Mayor of Sylva. He was Jackson County's representative to the General Assembly in 1933, 1939, and 1943. Edward Scheidt was an FBI special agent stationed in central North Carolina at the time this letter was written.

This letter is apparently in response to a letter from Tompkins to Scheidt. Scheidt responds to Tompkins regarding a man named Arthur Otto Weidelich. The original letter is still unknown. This response is ominously vague, only making clear that the FBI was already watching Weidelich closely and would continue to do so.

There is a possibility that (given the time period of the early 1940s) Tompkins and/or Scheidt suspected Weidelich of being a German spy. While this conjecture is excited, it is likely not true. Weidelich is reported to have moved to the U.S. in 1907 – 10 years before U.S. involvement in WWI and 34 years before U.S. involvement in WWII. Weidelich worked for the North Carolina Forestry Association (NCFA) during an effort to reforest western North Carolina. It seems unlikely that Germany would send a spy 10 years or 30+ years in advance of a war.

Naturalization documents from 1907 report that Weidelich could speak English when he moved to the U.S. He is also the translator of a book called *The Forest Manager*, which was originally in German. It listed as a reference in a 1939 book titled *The Farm Outlook for 1940* (U.S. Department of Agriculture 46).

Apparently nothing immediately became of Weidelich after the exchange of these letters, because two years later, in late 1943, he was reported in the *Sylva Herald* to be attending a forestry convention as the chairman of the membership and finance committees of the NCFA (Sylva).

Another interesting aspect of this document is the timeline of the communication. Although Tompkins' original letter is unavailable, first paragraph of Scheidt's response

states that it was dated April 21. The response itself is dated April 22. That means it took no more than one day for Tompkins' initial letter to reach Charlotte from Sylva in the early 1940s. If the letter moved back to Sylva at the same speed it got to Charlotte, that would've meant Tompkins got his response no more than two days after writing!

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

- Sometimes a manuscript's handwriting can make editing it challenging. That was not the case with this letter, as it was typed. The only concern with transcribing it was the dark crease halfway through the paper that makes the salutation hard to read. I think it's safe to assume it says, "Dear Sire," but I don't want to promise that.
- I entered onto a new line whenever the body of the letter reached a new line, because I wanted to stay true to its original form.
- Regarding the letterhead: Since this whole document is printed, I wasn't 100 percent sure where the letterhead ended. I typed up the entire thing.

Federal Bureau of Investigation
United States Department of Justice
914 Johnston Building
Charlotte, North Carolina
April 22, 1941

Mr. Dan Tompkins, Editor¹
The Jackson County Journal²
Sylva, North Carolina.

Dear Sir.

Receipt is acknowledged of your letter dated
April 21, 1941, wherein you supply information relative to
A.O. Weidelich.³

¹ Dan Tompkins, born 1890, was an influential figure in Western North Carolina, especially around Sylva. He served as the editor of the Jackson County Journal from 1912 until 1943 – except for during the period of 1917-18, when he volunteered for the military during World War I (“Special Collections”). Tompkins was Jackson County’s Representative to the General Assembly in 1933, 1939, and 1943. He was the reading clerk in the House of Representatives for a time, and he served multiple terms as the mayor of Sylva starting in 1919 (Jackson County Genealogical Society 456).

² The Jackson County Journal started up in 1906, and Tompkins became editor-in-chief in 1912 (Jackson County Genealogical Society 456). This paper stopped publishing only a few years after this letter was sent, in 1943 (Austin).

³ Arthur Otto Weidelich, born 1884, was a German immigrant from Pforzheim who arrived in the U.S. around 1907 (Ancestry.com, Road Island). He had lived in Jackson County, N.C. for more than 10 years at the time this letter was written (Ancestry.com, 1930). As an employee of the North Carolina Forestry Association, he took part in reforestation efforts in Western North Carolina (“Reforestation planting”).

I appreciate the enclosure⁴ which accompanied your letter. I desire to inform you that this office is and has been for sometime extremely interested in the activities of this individual. In the event of an opportunity to secure additional information relative to this individual, you may rest assured that it will be greatly appreciated.

Very truly yours,

Edward Scheidt⁵
Special Agent in Charge

⁴ I don't know what the enclosure was. I could speculate that it was a photograph or a note, or anything else pertaining to Weidelich.

⁵ Edward Scheidt, born 1903, was a special agent with the FBI. At the time this letter was written, he was working in Charlotte (Ancestry.com, 1940). He is reported to have been born in Minnesota and married in New York (Ancestry.com, New York).

Works Cited

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