

Joe Bird's Letter to His Parents, Charles and Sally Bird

April 29, 1904

Hunter Library MSS 80-33-1

**Transcribed and Edited by
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**For ENGL 618: Research Methods in English
Western Carolina University
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Series statement

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

Joe Bird is the son of Charles Asbury Bird and Sally Bird. Joe attended the School for the Deaf and Dumb in Morganton, North Carolina, because he was partially deaf from a childhood accident. At the school he studied to be a linotypist and went on to become co-editor of the *Bryson City Times* and later on, the *Sylva Herald* (*Jackson County Heritage* 73).

In this letter, Joe is writing to his parents Charles and Sally. Charles Bird worked as a farmer, Qualla Township political figure, store clerk, and was at one point a chairman of the Jackson County Board of Commissioners.

Joe writes about the measles outbreak in his school, his homesickness, and his witnessing a barn burning. The theme of home and family remain constant throughout the letter. Joe mentions two of his brothers and expresses his desire to return home when the school closes for break instead of working for someone else.

Editorial Statement

Joe Bird's letter is on stationery from Morganton's School for the Deaf and Dumb. There are two front and back pages of Joe's letter; the letterhead appears twice but Joe only dates the first page of his letter. This transcription follows a diplomatic format, meaning that there are no corrections of spelling errors, punctuation errors, or any other errors; what is transcribed is done so without overt invasive editing. The letterhead is included although the formatting is not exact to the letter, rather all information is centered in order of which they appear on the page. Nevertheless, all letterhead information is included. To preserve the idea of diplomatic editing, the letterhead appears once again on the third page with the blanks of left out information included.

The transcription replicates the letter's original page numbers so that there is no confusion for the reader. There are several names mentioned within the document. While some are annotated, such as Joe's family members, others were left without annotation because students attending Morganton's School for the Deaf and Dumb did not necessarily come from Morganton, therefore making their specific identities unknown.

[MS page 1]

[To: Mr. & Mrs. C.A. Bird]¹

E. MoK. Goodwin, Supt.²

North Carolina

School for the Deaf and Dumb,

Morganton, N.C., April 29, 1904

My dear Parents,

I am not feeling much well now.

I got a letter from you day before yesterday and was glad to hear from you.

I was surprised that Terrell³ went to Asheville.

Many of the boys & girls are sick and have measles.

One half of my classmates are sick. They are Charlie Cape, Oscar Hunter, Nora Woodell, Henry Wooding, Alphonso Silver and Mary Hagwood.

Burt Enloe is sick and is not going to school now.

Now the leaves of the trees are beginning to grow.

¹ Charles Asbury Bird and Sarah Ermina "Sally" Terrell Bird, Joe's parents.

² Edward McKee Goodwin was the superintendent of the School for the Deaf and Dumb until 1937 when he died according to NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and the Department of Commerce—Bureau of the Census.

³ James Terrell Bird was born on May 25, 1885, and died on August 22, 1953. He attended Cullowhee College where he met his wife, Clara Alice McGuire. He dropped out of college and moved to Los Angeles. After returning to Cullowhee and marrying Clara who also dropped out of college, they moved to California. They returned to Sylva, North Carolina where Terrell became owner of a car dealership before moving to Asheville NC where he had another car dealership. See *Jackson County Heritage North Carolina Vol. 1*, p. 70, 73, entry 205, for more information.

[MS page 2]

We were much astonished to see it snow on the twentieth of April. I am glad to hear that you all live in a new house now and I think about it nearly every day for I am homesick.

How is your garden doing?

I got a letter from John¹ about a week ago saying he wanted me to have some photos made and send him one. Well perhaps I am going to have some before long for John wants one so badly. Some of the teachers ask me if I had had measles and I said "I don't know." Have I ever had measles? If not, perhaps I will get it this week. One of our teachers Miss Welsh is afraid of getting measles for she has not had measles. I heard that Mr. Goodwin said if any of us have measles when the time is always to go

¹ Probably John Williamson Bird was born on December 28, 1882 and died in 1964. According to Elinor Bird Barnum, he was the oldest son and second-born to Charles and Sally Bird. See *Jackson County Heritage North Carolina Vol. 1*, p. 73, entry 207 for more information.

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E. MoK. Goodwin, Supt.
North Carolina
School for the Deaf and Dumb,
Morganton, N.C., _____ 190

home in June, we will have to stay here longer for the climate is difficult from the climate at home.

A few nights ago we saw a barn burning about a mile away and in the morning we heard that the barn was set on fire by a man who was smoking his pipe in the loft.¹ Last March our base ball team went over to Hickory and we visited some large carpenter shops and a man said we could get jobs there as soon as this school is closed but I don't want to do that for I want to work for you all and because I am devoted to my home.

¹ According to *The News Herald* published Thursday, April 28, 1904, Mr. P. F. Goodson's livery stable caught fire on Tuesday, April 26, 1904. This would correspond with Joe's entry about a barn catching fire a few nights ago since he dated this letter on Friday, April 29, 1904.

[MS page 4]

Please write to me soon.

With much love to youall, I am.

Your son,

Joe Bird¹

¹ Joel Monroe Bird, known as Joe, was born on September 27, 1888, and died in September of 1969. He attended the School for the Deaf and Dumb in Morganton NC. At the school, he studied to be a linotypist. According to his daughter Betty B. Shuford, he became partially deaf as a result of an accident. Joe became a co-editor of *Bryson City Times* and after his wife's passing in 1942, moved to Sylva NC where he was a co-editor of the *Sylva Herald*. See *Jackson County Heritage North Carolina Vol. 1*, p. 73 entry 206 for more information.

Works Cited

- Bird, Joe. Letter to Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Bird, 29 April 1904. Western Carolina University Special and Digital Collections, Hunter Library MSS 80-33-1. <https://www.wcu.edu/hunter-library/find/special-and-digital-collections.aspx>.
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