

**Personal Letter from Dan Tompkins to his mother and family**

**05 January, 1932**

**Hunter Library MSS 80-14**

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10 December 2018**

## 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 was written by Dan Tompkins to his mother and family, in Sylva, NC, while he was staying in Raleigh for business. As the letter heading reflects, Tompkins was a North Carolina State Representative during this time, thus he would have traveled to Raleigh on political business. In addition to serving three terms in the North Carolina House of Representatives, Tompkins was also the editor of the *Jackson County Journal* from 1912 to 1943 (Austin).

While in Raleigh, he liaised with other politicians, including the governor, as well as with other journalists, including John Paris and Beatrice Cobb. Dan 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. During his time serving in the North Carolina House of Representatives, Dan Tompkins was instrumental in securing funds for the expansion of facilities to Western Carolina Teachers College. Through his political service and heated editorials in the *Jackson County Journal*, he also served an important role in preventing the removal of the college from Cullowhee to Asheville (Austin).

Tompkins married Emily Weigle, a school teacher, in 1931. The couple lived in Sylva during the Summer and in nearby Webster in the Winters (Austin). Emily’s trip home that is referred to in this letter is likely her trip from Raleigh, where she may have accompanied her husband for a portion of his journey, back to their home in Webster.

### **Editor's Note**

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. Additionally, the placement of the letterhead and greetings attempt to replicate those from the manuscript.

Tompkins's handwriting contains some letter inconsistencies that make it difficult to decipher at times. He always uses the capital "E" form for the first letter of every word with an "e," but other letters vary, such as "k" and "r." The word "knocking", which appears in brackets on the first page of the manuscript is illegible in the original document, though "knocking" is what it most closely resembles based on an assessment of Tompkins's handwriting style. The phrase "knocking along all right" is presumed to mean the equivalent of "getting along all right."

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*North Carolina General Assembly*  
*House of Representatives*  
*Raleigh*

Jan 5, 1932

Dearest mother and the rest of you:<sup>1</sup>

I intended writing to you all yesterday, but was very busy. I am located with Mrs. Ray,<sup>2</sup> and quite comfortably so. She has been very kind, and has done everything possible to make me comfortable and at home.

Just had a letter from Emily.<sup>3</sup> She stood her trip home splendidly, and is enjoying her visit.

Hope everything is [knocking] along all right at home, and that you are all well. After the ceremonies etc., along with

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<sup>1</sup> Annie Luck Tompkins was the mother of Dan Tompkins and the wife of Dr. William Frank Tompkins, who died when Dan was six years old. After his death, they moved back to the Luck home, where Dan was raised by his mother, maternal grandmother, and two aunts. He and his wife, Emily, lived with Annie and his two aunts during the time of this letter.

<sup>2</sup> Unknown. Likely a local boarder.

<sup>3</sup> Emily Weigle Tompkins married Dan Tompkins on June 23, 1931. She was a grade school teacher. Originally from Augusta, Georgia, Emily became a second grade teacher at Sylva Elementary School after the couple married. For more information, see Austin, "Dan Tompkins: Mountain Editor."

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the other newspaper men and miss Cobb<sup>4</sup>. I had dinner with Mr. John Parris,<sup>5</sup> at the Carolina.<sup>6</sup>

Tonight, I am going around to the reception at the mansion,<sup>7</sup> and pay my respects to the Governor.<sup>8</sup>

You will be hearing from me again shortly.

Love to everybody,

Dan

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<sup>4</sup> Beatrice Cobb was the editor of the *Morganton News Herald*. For more information see "Beatrice Cobb" in *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*.

<sup>5</sup> John Paris was a journalist and author from Jackson County, North Carolina. He would later become a famous war correspondent during WWII and was noted for his column "Roaming the Mountains" that was a regular feature of the *Asheville Citizen*. For more information see "John Paris" in *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*.

<sup>6</sup> The Carolina Inn is a historic hotel in Chapel Hill, NC. It was built in 1924 and designed by architect Author C. Nash. The Carolina is a landmark in the triangle area of North Carolina. For more information, see [carolinainn.com](http://carolinainn.com).

<sup>7</sup> An examination of local newspaper during the dates of and around Jan. 5, 1932 did not yield any results detailing the nature of the reception at the mansion. Due to this reason, it is assumed to have been a private party.

<sup>8</sup> According to *North Carolina Government 1585-1979: A Narrative and Statistical History*, the governor between 1929-1933 was Governor Oliver Max Gardner (D).

## Works Cited

“About the Inn” The Carolina Inn. 2018 <https://www.carolinainn.com/>

Austin, Suelle Reece. “Dan Tompkins: Mountain Editor.” MA Thesis, Western Carolina University, 1966.

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