

**MSS. Collection #137****Fielding Fry Papers, ca. 1800-1979. 4 boxes (94 folders), ca. 1100 items.**

NOTE: The numbers cited in parentheses, e.g. 1:5, refer the researcher to the Series#:Folder# in which that name/topic will be found.

**INTRODUCTION**

The Fielding Fry Papers consist of correspondence, printed materials, photographs, financial, and legal papers pertaining to the political and private life of Fielding Lewis **Fry** (1892-1961). Fry was mayor of Greensboro from 1947-48 as well as a member of Greensboro City Council. Researchers interested in city government, will find newspaper clippings, letters, photographs, and other materials while Fry was in office as mayor. North Carolina Railroad material ranging from historical sketches to a controversy over stock ownership is also included.

Materials relating to his daughter, Martha Williams Fry **DeVane**, document the early years of a young woman brought up in high society Greensboro. Researchers will also find genealogical material related to not only the Fry family and their ancestors, but also to the ancestors of the DeVane family.

**Arrangement:** This collection is organized into fourteen series according to subject and document type. Each series is arranged by document type and then alphabetically. The series are: **Correspondence**, ca. 1800-1961; **Currency**, ca. 1860-1920; **Martha W. Fry DeVane**, ca. 1917-1950; **Financial**, ca. 1934-1960; **Genealogy**, ca. 1880-1960; **Legal**, 1905, 1949; **Literary**, ca. 1890-1950; **Maps**, 1928; **Miscellaneous**, ca. 1940-1950; **North Carolina Railroad**, 1901-1961; **Photographs**, 1870-1960; **Printed Materials**, 1887-1961; **Rotary Club**, 1917-1945; and **Scrapbook**, ca. 1966-1983.

**Provenance:** The materials in this collection came from the Fry house and were donated to the museum by his daughter, Mrs. Martha Williams Fry DeVane, on September 23, 1997. The accession number is 1997.99.1

**Processing:** J. Stephen Catlett began processing this collection prior to 2001. The arrangement and finding aid were completed by Christine A. Dumoulin, Archives Assistant, in January 2002.

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

**Fielding Lewis Fry** was born in Greensboro on March 12, 1892, the son of Howell Lewis and Mollie Pepper Fry. He had five brothers and sisters, including a twin sister named Frances. He attended the Greensboro public schools and went on to the University of North Carolina. Upon graduation, he began working as an insurance underwriter before starting his own business. On December 15, 1915, Fry married Fanny Williams. They had one daughter, Martha Williams Fry. Despite his many professional commitments, his family life was always a priority.

After his business was established, he eventually merged with Mitchell Insurance, to create Mitchell-Fry Insurance Agency; it was one of the largest agencies in the state. In addition to his insurance dealings, Fry was also active in several financial and business enterprises. In 1934, he was instrumental in organizing the Guilford National Bank, serving as a director and vice-president; it would eventually merge with the North Carolina National Bank in 1961. He was also a director of the North Carolina Railroad and Odell Hardware Co.

During his lifetime, Fry was active in several civic organizations. He was a charter member and past president of the Greensboro Rotary Club. He was also an organizer for the Children's Home Society and served on its board from its founding until his death. His interest in local Greensboro history kept him active within the community, encouraging the publication of a city history by Ethel Stephens Arnett and Walter Clinton Jackson. He was an active member of the Greensboro Historical Museum as well as a board member of Brookgreen Gardens in South Carolina.

Fry was also politically active and began his career in 1943 as a city councilman, serving for four years. In 1947, he became Mayor of Greensboro for one term. During his tenure, a retirement plan for city employees was established and the one-way street system downtown was implemented. When a polio epidemic struck in 1948, Fry encouraged the city to provide aid to various agencies, which supplied hospital beds and other aid for those stricken with the disease.

Fry also held a reputation for being an excellent singer and performed for numerous church services, weddings, funerals, and other functions in Greensboro. He passed away on July 26, 1961, at the age of 69 after several months of declining health.

**Martha Williams Fry DeVane** (1916-2001) was the only daughter and child of Fanny and Fielding Fry. She had a very close relationship with her family, especially her father. She attended Hollins College in Virginia, then returned to Greensboro and finished her education at Woman's College, now the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. Growing up in true high society fashion, she was often written up in the society pages of the *Greensboro Daily News* and *Greensboro Record*. She married Richard Reed DeVane in 1940 and had two children, Martha and Mollie. She was active in both the Junior League and the Children's Home Society. She died on August 28, 2001.

**Biographical Sources:** The biographical information was gathered from newspaper clippings located in the North Carolina biography files at the Greensboro Public Library. Other information was obtained from materials within the collection.

### **SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE**

The types of materials in this collection include photographs, legal items such as proxies and wills, printed materials such as newspapers, certificates, genealogy charts, pamphlets, letters, currency, and maps. Most materials pertain to Fry and encompass his professional life as well as his civic duties and family life. The family materials mostly pertain to his daughter, Martha Williams Fry, and the family of her husband, Richard Reed DeVane.

Several series contain materials related to the different professional and civic activities of Fry. Folders 1:5-6 contain correspondence from his time as mayor of Greensboro. One letter from Governor Kerr Scott discusses exempting municipally operated vehicles from the gas tax

(1:6). Fry also received an invitation from President Harry Truman to participate in a Highway Safety conference in Washington, D.C. (1:6). There is also his nameplate from when he was mayor (9:1).

The financial series contains receipts, stock certificates, legal, and printed materials relating to his involvement with Greensboro Bank. & Trust. There are several letters to stockholders surveying the conditions of the bank and periodic reviews of stock certificate accounts (4:1). A report from the president of United Bank and Trust details the assets and liabilities of the bank (4:4).

The North Carolina Railroad is an interesting series discussing several different issues related to the railroad; Fry was on the board of directors. It includes letters pertaining to Confederate currency owned by the railroad and loaned to the NC Dept. of Archives and History for cataloging and appraisal (10:2). There is also a pamphlet for the 100-year anniversary re-enactment of the battle of First Manassas (Bull Run), where a special Southern Railway train was requested to transport NC re-enactors to the event (10:3). Letters, clippings, proxy slips, and other documents pertaining to a controversy between stockholders make up the bulk of materials in this series.

Personal materials range from letters and receipts to newspaper clippings and artwork. Folder 1:1 contains letters from different members of the Alston and DeVane families relating to daily events. One letter from J.J. Johnston to his aunt, Elizabeth Alston, upon his mother's death discusses "her misfortune not to know the Holy Catholic Church" (1845). There are also materials related to his daughter, Martha, such as a 1932 driver's license (3:4), school programs, and personal letters written to Fry. The genealogical materials pertain mostly to ancestors of the DeVane family, including three books about different family names (5:2) and the transcribed Civil War period letters of Rebecca P. Davis (5:3).

The majority of the photos are various portraits of members of the Williams family, including the parents of Fanny Williams Fry and various members of the Alston family. There is also a small group of unidentified landscape and house photos (11:5-6), possibly of Fry's home on 227 Fisher Park Circle. Photos of Fry himself are mostly press photos taken by Jack Moebes while Fry was mayor (11:3).

**Collection Weaknesses:** While the collection contains materials pertaining to Fry's professional life and civic interests, it is hard to get a sense of him on a personal level. The correspondence written by him is minimal. Secondly, in spite of the letters written to Fry, few documents pertain directly to him during his term as mayor, with the exception of photos and newspaper clippings. There is also little genealogical information about the Fry family.

## **SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

### **1. Correspondence. 11 folders (ca. 250 items). ca. 1800-1961.**

This series contains letters to and from Fielding Fry and various members of the Fry family. There are also numerous letters congratulating Fry on his election as mayor of Greensboro.

Folder 1:1 contains mostly early correspondence and a couple receipts belonging to members of the Alston, Fry, and DeVane families, dating from about 1817 to 1918. A letter to Edward Alston refers to the sale of cotton, a coffin, and whiskey (1831). One letter from Elizabeth Alston

asks a friend or family member to bring a wash pan because hers broke the week before (1834). Fry's personal correspondence includes letters from friends, family, and business associates. Early letters include Fry's "first" letter written as a kindergartener to his parents as well as a letter from New York City when Fielding was traveling with his wife, Fanny (1:2). Several letters from his son-in-law, Richard Reed DeVane, detail house hunting in the early 1940s (1:4).

While mayor, Fry received numerous letters regarding various projects and events in Greensboro and the state. A voting card from the Young Colored Democratic Club of Guilford County (1947) listed candidates they had "confidence and faith" in; Fry was among them (1:5). A letter from Albert K. Moore expresses a need to "salvage that million plus dollar housing project that old council turned down," criticizing the objectors as being "the country club crowd" (1:5). Other items of interest include a notice from the Library of Congress acknowledging the donation of two photographs, a recipe for belt cement used at the Granite Cotton Mills (ca. 1890; 1:10) and an editorial about a sit-in in Durham (NC) and the legal right to discriminate (1:7).

## **2. Currency. 1 folder (4 items). ca. 1860-1920.**

Within this series are four pages of currency, two of North Carolina Confederate Currency and two of German Marks dating post World War I.

## **3. DeVane, Martha W. Fry. 7 folders (45 items). ca. 1917-1950.**

Martha Williams Fry was the only child of Fielding and Fanny Fry. She was born on October 27, 1916, and died August 28, 2001. Some of the earlier items related to her include a bunny she made out of construction paper (3:1) and letters to her father as a young girl (3:2).

Among the more interesting items relate to Martha as a woman brought up in high society, as indicated by an invitation/dance card from a dance held at the Jefferson Country Club (3:3). Her scrapbook documents the importance of her wedding to Richard Reed DeVane through the many articles written in the society pages of the *Greensboro Daily News* and *Greensboro Record* (3:8). There is also a letter inviting Martha to join the Greensboro Junior League.

Other items include several programs, including a graduation program from Grimsley High School and a Christmas program at the Aycock School, (3:3) and correspondence from when Martha attended Hollins College. One letter apologizes to her parents, expressing her embarrassment over her poor grades (3:2).

## **4. Financial. 8 folders (70 items). ca. 1934-1960.**

This series contains materials mostly relating to Fry's business dealings, including his involvement with Greensboro Bank & Trust and United Bank & Trust. Fry was director of Greensboro Bank & Trust. Materials include letters to stockholders surveying the conditions of the bank and periodic reviews of accounts (4:1). Other bank related documents include resolutions regarding amendments to by-laws (4:2), board minutes, (4:3), and reports (4:4).

Materials relating to the United Bank & Trust include certificate of incorporation and a depositor's agreement (4:7), and a brochure announcing an auction to liquidate and sell the Guilford Bank Building where the bank was housed (4:8).

**5. Genealogy. 3 folders (60 items). ca. 1880-1960.**

The materials in this series include a collection of letters, pages from family Bibles, books, and notes tracing the DeVane and part of the Fry families many generations back. The DeVane family name originated in Scotland, and there are also documents which indicate other surnames associated with the DeVane family including Murphy and Wyatt.

Some of the more interesting items from folder 5:1 include a letter regarding the location of Tommie Murphy's grave, an 1889 receipt for a Rev. McBryde who purchased items for the Little River Academy (NC?), and a short history of the surname DeVane and its arms.

Folder 5:2 contains three books relating to related families, such as the Davis family, an autobiographical sketch of Richard Henry Lewis, Sr., and brief sketches of the Blount, Gray, Maupin, and Toler families. Of particular interest is a collection of transcribed Civil War period letters belonging to Rebecca P. Davis. In them, she details daily events to her son, Burwell Davis, who is on active duty. In one humorous letter, she chides her son about sending a bottle of ink, as she had to write her letter with pokeberry juice.

**6. Legal. 1 folder (2 items). 1905, 1949.**

This small series contains two items, a resolution adopted by the Greensboro Loan & Trust Company upon the death of Howell Lewis Fry Sr., and the last will and testament of Cantey V.R. DeVane.

**7. Literary. 2 folders (4 items). ca. 1890-1950.**

Folder 7:1 contains three speeches related to the history of Greensboro. One speech by Ethel Stephens Arnett contains seven vignettes from her book, *Greensboro, North Carolina: The County Seat of Guilford*, which did not make it into the book. They are as follows:

- a) Mayor Jabez Mendenhall (1892) handing out a sentence, illustrating the informality of the courts
- b) A guest who did not want eggs on his breakfast menu and the humorous exchange with the waiter at a local hotel
- c) Scarlet fever epidemic in 1834; John McClintock Logan family
- d) Bottled medicine ads taken from the Greensboro Patriot and the various claims of curing all ills
- e) Moore's Springs located on Spring Garden St. across from what is now Aycock Auditorium on UNC-G's campus
- f) Greensboro's battle with the common housefly and the campaign to combat them in 1913
- g) The death and wake of Dr. David P. Wier, ca. 1855, former Edgeworth Female Seminary instructor and pastor at First Presbyterian Church.

Also included is a speech used for guided tours of the Blandwood Mansion (ca. 1950s) and a speech given to the Winston-Salem Torch Club on Moravians and the Revolutionary War.

The transcript in this series (7:2) is of legal proceedings of W.O. Stratford vs. The City of Greensboro and Ceasar Cone (1896), disputing the placing of another cotton mill on lands purchased by Cone.

**8. Maps. 1 folder (1 item). 1928.**

Street map of the city of Greensboro.

**9. Miscellaneous. 1 folder (4 items). ca. 1940-1950.**

This series contains Fry's nameplate used while he was mayor, a list of items to include in his will, and a short history of Episcopal churchwomen.

**10. North Carolina Railroad. 12 folders (ca. 300 items). 1901-1961.**

The North Carolina Railroad was built between 1849 and 1856, and was the first railroad built through Guilford County and Greensboro. During his lifetime, Fry was a director and stockholder. This series contains correspondence, clippings, a history of the railroad, maps, reports, pamphlets, and documents pertaining to the stockholders.

The bulk of the correspondence pertains to Confederate currency that the railroad owned (10:2) and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary re-enactment of the Battle of First Manassas (Bull Run) (10:3). The currency correspondence addresses early museum ethics by how the NC Department of Archives and History handled the cataloging and appraisal of the currency. A member of the Dept. of Archives and History was reprimanded for displaying some of the currency at a beer joint in Raleigh, NC. One letter makes a request for a "special train" to transport Civil War re-enactors to and from Virginia to commemorate the battle of Bull Run.

Other materials include a map of the eastern lines for the Southern Railway System (10:7), clippings of a possible merger with Southern Railway and Norfolk Southern railroads (10:8), a report recommending a change in the by-laws of the NC Railroad, (10:11), and Photostats of a 1901 account of the development of the railroad (10:5).

Materials pertaining to the stockholders relate mostly to a controversy concerning overpayment of stock dividends to the state of North Carolina and stock ownership (10:12).

**11. Photographs. 8 folders (100 items). 1870-1960.**

This series contains images of Fry as mayor, family photos, landscapes, houses and postcards. The family photos are images mostly from the Fry family. Images include the parents of Fanny Williams Fry, Martha Edward Alston and Boddie Buxton Williams, Martha Williams Fry as a baby, and a cute photo of Doodlebug, the family cat standing on his "house" (11:1). There are several photos taken of the Alston family by local Greensboro photographers, Sidney Alderman and Alderman & Eutsler.

A series of photos from Fayetteville, NC, document a major flood that occurred in 1945 (11:1). Other interesting photos include a 1901 group photo of a men's tennis club, a photo/postcard of a resort at Bath, NC, ca. 1920, and a photo of two women gathering sweaters for the Red Cross during World War II (11:7). A signed photo of Smith Richardson was given to Fry, most likely during his term as mayor (11:8).

Photos of Fry himself include one as a child (11:2), press photos taken by Greensboro photographer Jack Moebes, and various photos of him as mayor, including a group photo with city councilman, E.L. Falconer (11:3).

## **12. Printed Materials. 26 folders (140 items). 1887-1961.**

This series contains a variety of items, such as broadsides, certificates, pamphlets, programs, newspaper clippings, and reports, both personal and professional. Many of the items show Fry's interest in a variety of subjects as well as his involvement in different organizations, such as the Children's Home Society and the Greensboro Historical Museum.

There are numerous materials relating to Fry's political involvement as city councilman and mayor of Greensboro. Among the more interesting items are several cards asking voters to vote "Fielding L. Fry, City Council", a 1929 pamphlet titled "Facts Concerning Greensboro," and a certificate of merit for his involvement in the war memorial fund (12:4). There are also numerous clippings from his term as mayor, ranging from election-day results to the visit of famous opera singer, Lily Pons (12:12). Of particular interest is a 1903 broadside announcing a speech by Gov. Charles Aycock and Professor J.Y. Joyner titled "Education & Proposed Graded School for the Town of Graham" at Oneida Cotton Mills; the mills would be shut down in order for all employees to attend (12:1).

Also of interest are several programs, including from the Elson Art Exhibit to benefit the Charles Aycock School (12:22), a benefit for North Carolina flood victims, and an all-male performance of *The Dream of a Clown* (1940), in which Fry was a cast-member (12:23). Researchers will also find several different newspapers & newsletters, such as *The Democrat*, *The Jaycee Projector* (1948), and *Glance at Greensboro* published by the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce (12:10,11,14).

## **13. Rotary Club. 10 folders (37 items). 1917-1945.**

The materials in this series pertain mostly to the activities of the Greensboro Rotary Club. The first meeting of the Greensboro chapter was held on January 22, 1917. One letter announcing a meeting had an added request of members to bring a knife, fork, and spoon (13:1). Folder 13:10 contains various Rotary songbooks and song sheets. This series also contains newspaper clippings discussing various Rotary events (13:5), a membership card belonging to Ceasar Cone (13:6), and several broadsides (13:3).

## **14. Scrapbook. 1 folder (1 item). ca. 1966-1983.**

This scrapbook contains several certificates, newspaper clippings, and photographs from various projects involving the Greensboro Garden Club. The club received several certificates for their involvement in local beautification projects, such as HANDS and for 50 years of membership in the National Council of State Garden Clubs. The clippings and photos pertain mostly to the Greensboro Historical Museum, including the museum landscaping project and the moving and restoration of the McNairy house.

**FOLDER LISTING**

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	2	"	-- Fry, Fielding (1898-1924)
	3	"	-- " " (1927-1929)
	4	"	-- " " (1940-1946)
	5	"	-- " " (1947-1948)
	6	"	-- " " (1948-1949)
	7	"	-- " " (1960-1961)
	8	"	-- Fry, Lewis (1886)
	9	"	-- Miscellaneous
	10	"	-- News Release (Mitchell-Fry Insurance)
2	1	Currency	
3	1	DeVane, Martha Williams Fry	-- Artwork
	2	"	-- Correspondence (1926-1952)
	3	"	-- Printed -- Dance Card (ca. 1935)
	4	"	-- " -- Leaflet "Beginners Lesson"
	5	"	-- " -- Driver's License (NC) (1932-33)
	6	"	-- " -- Newspaper Clippings
	7	"	-- " -- Programs *Hansel & Gretel (ca. 1948) *Christmas Program (1948) *Grimsley High School- Convocation (1933)
	8	"	-- Scrapbook (1940)
4	1	Financial	-- Greensboro Bank & Trust -- Correspondence (1926-1947)
	2	"	-- " " " " -- Legal (1925-1931)
	3	"	-- " " " " -- "
	4	"	-- " " " " -- Reports (1929-1931)
	5	"	-- Receipts (1859, 1917)
	6	"	-- Stock Certificates (1909-1929)
	7	"	-- United Bank & Trust -- Legal (1932)
	8	"	-- " " " " -- Printed (1931-1944)
5	1	Genealogy	-- DeVane Family (1880-1960)
	2	"	-- " " (1956-1958)
	3	"	-- " " -- Transcript -- Letters of Rebecca P. Davis (1855-1899)
6	1	Legal	-- Resolutions (1905)
	2	"	-- Wills -- DeVane, Cantey V.R. (1945)
7	1	Literary	-- Speeches (ca. 1955-1969)
	2	"	-- Transcripts (1896)



<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>	
8	1	Maps	-- City of Greensboro (ca. 1928)
9	1	Miscellaneous	
10	1	North Carolina Railroad	-- Correspondence (1951-1961)
	2	"	-- " -- Confederate Currency (1961)
	3	"	-- " -- Re-enactment-Battle of First Manassas (Bull Run) (1961)
	4	"	-- Financial (1955-1960)
	5	"	-- History (1901)
	6	"	-- Legal (1959-1961)
	7	"	-- Maps (1959)
	8	"	-- Printed -- Newspaper Clippings (1960-1961)
	9	"	-- " -- Miscellaneous (n.d.)
	10	"	-- " -- Pamphlets (1961)
	11	"	-- " -- Reports (n.d.)
	12	"	-- Stockholders (1955-1961)
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	2	"	-- Fry, Fielding (1947-1948)
	3	"	-- Greensboro, NC (ca. 1965)
	4	"	-- Houses (ca. 1900)
	5	"	-- Landscapes (ca. 1900)
	6	"	-- Portraits (ca. 1870-1955)
	7	"	-- Red Cross (ca. 1942)
	8	"	-- Richardson, Smith
12	1	Printed Materials	-- BroadSides
	2	"	-- " -- NC Inspection & Rating Bureau
	3	"	-- Bulletins
	4	"	-- Certificates
	5	"	-- Handbook -- Woman's College-UNCG (1935-1936)
	6	"	-- Invitations
	7	"	-- Magazines
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	13	"	-- " " -- Greensboro History
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<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>	
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	19	"	-- Pamphlets -- Miscellaneous
	20	"	-- Pamphlets -- "Stop that Cold!" (1945)
	21	"	-- Pamphlets -- Travel
	22	"	-- Programs -- Elson Art Exhibit (n.d.)
	23	"	-- " -- Performing Arts (1913-1940)
	24	"	-- " -- Performing Arts (1913-1940)
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*Link, The*: 12:9 (1962)  
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**McMaster**, John M.: 10:12  
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 Moore, Albert K.: 1:5  
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**National** Council of State Garden Clubs: 14:1  
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**Oneida** Cotton Mills, Graham, N.C.: broadside (1903), 12:1

**Paine**, Sidney S.: 1:6

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Photographers (Greensboro):

    Alderman, Sidney: 11:6

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Stratford, W.O. vs. City of Greensboro & Ceasar Cone: 7:2 (1896)

Studebaker Corporation: stock certificate, 4:6 (1929)

Sutton, Fred I.: 1:6

**Textile** Industry: W. O. Stratford vs. Ceasar Cone & City of Greensboro: 7:2 (1896)  
Truman, President Harry: 1:6  
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**Webb**, Hon. Alexander: 10:12

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**Young** Colored Democratic Club of Guilford County: 1:5 (1947)

**Appendix I- Books Related to Fielding Fry Collection**

Note: Although these books are associated with Fry, they were not kept as part of this collection. They are located in the Rare Book collection.

1. *An Account of the European Settlements in America in Six Parts.* (1760)- 2 copies
2. Caruthers, D.D., Rev. F. W. *Revolutionary Incidents & Sketches of Character Chiefly in the Old North State.*
3. Caruthers, Rev. E.W., A.M. *A Sketch of the Life & Character of the Rev. David Caldwell, D.D.* (1842)\*
4. *Charter & Ordinances of the City of Greensboro, North Carolina.* (1906)
5. Cooke, William D., A.M. (compiled by) *Revolutionary History of North Carolina In Three Lectures.* (1853)
6. Draper, Lyman C. LLD. *King's Mountain and Its Heroes: History of the Battle of Kings Mountain.* (1880)
7. Halloway, Laura C. *The Ladies of the Whitehouse or In the House of Presidents.* (1882)
8. Jones, J. Seawell. *Memorials of North Carolina.* (1838)
9. Jones, Jo. Seawell. *A Defense of the Revolutionary History of North Carolina.* (1834)
10. Lawson, John. *History of North Carolina.* (1903)
11. Martin, François-Xavier. *History of North Carolina.* (1829)
12. Michaux, R.R. *Sketches in the Life in North Carolina.* (1894)
13. Sprunt, James. *Chronicles of the Cape Fear River.* (1914)

\*Contains correspondence from Fielding Fry to William S. Powell