

MSS. Collection #50

Wilson Family Papers, ca. 1750-1982 [bulk 1830-1947]. 4 boxes (90 folders), ca. 535 items.

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

INTRODUCTION

The Wilson Family Papers consist of correspondence, financial and legal documents, photographs, and printed materials relating to multiple generations of the Wilson family of Greensboro and Guilford County. Nineteenth century family members are portrayed through items documenting their personal property, land ownership on South Buffalo Creek, and Civil War experiences. Materials collected by family members in the twentieth century relate primarily to First Presbyterian Church, Greensboro Senior High School, and William Maxwell Wilson's service in World War II. Researchers interested in the economy and land ownership in Guilford County during the nineteenth century and local schools during the first half of the twentieth century will find items of use in this collection.

Arrangement: This collection is organized into eight series by document type and/or subject. The series are: **Correspondence**, 1861-1969; **Currency**, 1852-1864; **Financial & Legal**, 1795-1941 [bulk mid-1800s]; **Military**, 1917-1982 [bulk 1940s]; **Miscellaneous**, 1869-1938; **Photographs**, ca. 1890s-1970; **Printed Materials**, 1844-1981 [bulk 1914-1945]; and **Scrapbook**, ca. 1750-1950.

Provenance: This collection was donated in several parts by Peggy O'Connell Wilson, who acquired some items while attending Greensboro Senior High School. Other materials were apparently passed down through the family of her husband, William Maxwell Wilson. The collection includes accession numbers 1986.20.125, 1995.26.1, 1995.155.2, 1997.39.1, and 2001.56.1.

Processing: This collection was organized by volunteers Cynthia Good and Alice Bailey, and the finding aid was completed by Alice Bailey in March 2014. Parts of the collection were reorganized and the finding aid was revised and expanded by Archivist Elise Allison in May 2018.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Peggy O'Connell (1925-2012) was born in Greensboro to Ozama Murr (1891-1979) and Fred Moore O'Connell (1892-1942). She attended St. Benedict's Catholic School for eight years and graduated from Greensboro Senior High in 1941. After earning a B.S. in Secretarial Administration from the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina in 1945, she

embarked on a long career with Wysong & Miles. She married William Maxwell Wilson (1922-1985) on December 4, 1965.

William Maxwell Wilson was the only child of Rosa Brooks (1884-1984) and Maxwell Morehead Wilson (1888-1961). He graduated from Greensboro Senior High in 1941 and served in the Army Air Forces during World War II. After earning a B.S. in Commerce from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1948, he became a real estate broker and developer, eventually opening his own business, Wilson Realty. He and his wife Peggy were active members of the community and First Presbyterian Church.

Only minimal information could be found about other family members represented in this collection. Maxwell Morehead Wilson worked for the wholesale grocery firm of Thomas & Howard Co. for 44 years, serving as a senior partner for 40 of those years. His father, Rufus Webster Wilson (1858-1923), was a farmer who married Cora Gamble (1866-1923) on April 14, 1887. Cora Gamble was the daughter of Amanda Denny (1832-1912) and Andrew Gamble (1801-1871). After her father died, her mother married William A. Donnell (1823-1912).

Rufus Webster Wilson was the third child and second son of Robert Wilson (1828-1890), who married Nellie Hoffman (1831-1910) in 1853. During the Civil War, Robert Wilson served in Company A of the 53rd North Carolina Infantry Regiment. The 1880 census lists him as a farmer and miller with nine children ranging in age from 5 to 25. He and his wife are buried in Bethel Presbyterian Church Cemetery in McLeansville along with his parents, Barbara Cobb (1810-1878) and Andrew William Wilson (ca. 1804-1866).

Andrew William Wilson was the son of Robert Wilson, and grandson of Agnes Chambers (1752-1782) and Captain Andrew Wilson Jr. (1752-1834). Captain Wilson fought at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse and had at least eight sons, including Robert, Andrew, John, and David, to whom he bequeathed his plantation on South Buffalo Creek. As part of the Nottingham Colony, his father, Andrew Wilson Sr. (1713-1774), was granted 640 acres of land by Lord Carteret, the Earl of Granville, in 1753.

Biographical Sources: The sources used to compile this biographical note include materials in the collection, Ancestry.com, the Guilford County Register of Deeds database, the Greensboro city directories, and the obituaries of various family members in the *News & Record* and preceding titles (see the folder at the beginning of the collection for copies).

SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE

The Wilson Family Papers span a period of over 200 years, focusing on the mid-nineteenth century and the World War II-era. The variety of materials offers an interesting juxtaposition between family members' personal accounts of everyday life and official documents relating to their lives (series 1, 3, 4 and 8). Although military documents, photographs, and printed materials predominate, the collection is eclectic with a wide variety of subjects.

Researchers interested in the nineteenth century should focus on the correspondence and financial and legal documents, particularly the estate records, which may shed light on the economy and land ownership in Guilford County during that period. Civil War-era items found in series 1, 2 and 8 span from the beginning of the war to the end of the Reconstruction, and include the letters of Robert Wilson (8:1), Confederate currency (2:1-4), and an Oath to the Union (8:4).

Many items in the collection may be of interest to researchers studying twentieth century topics. Of local relevance are printed materials relating to First Presbyterian Church (7:4) and Greensboro Senior High, including yearbooks from the World War I-era, as well as student handbooks and school newspapers that may shed light on student life at the outbreak of World War II (7:7-8, 7:23-24). Aspects of the war itself are represented with documents relating to William Maxwell Wilson's service in the Army Air Forces (4:16). Comparing his military records, which include confidential orders, extracts, and other documents, with the letters sent to his parents during the war may yield an interesting perspective on his experiences.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

1. Correspondence. 11 folders (ca. 140 items). 1861-1969.

The correspondence is arranged primarily by recipient, with the majority sent by William Maxwell to his parents Rosa Brooks and Maxwell Morehead Wilson during his service in World War II (1:10). Also included are nineteenth and early twentieth century letters exchanged by family members. Postcards from the early 1900s mark occasions such as Valentine's Day and Easter, or show scenes of Greensboro. Others feature military-themed images, travel destinations in the Eastern United States, and railroads (1:6). Also included are commemorative stamps issued by the NASA space program during the 1960s (1:4).

2. Currency. 6 folders (ca. 70 items). 1852-1864.

The majority of the currency dates from the Civil War and is in fair to poor condition. See the appendix for the specific denominations and years of bills. Of local interest are several bills produced by the Greensboro Mutual Life Insurance and Trust Company (2:4). Another notable item is an 1862 State of North Carolina 50 cent bill (signed) with several forty dollar bonds redeemable in 1877, 1878 & 1880 (unsigned, 2:5) printed on the reverse. A leather duo-fold wallet is also included in this series (2:6).

3. Financial & Legal. 7 folders (35 items). 1795-1941 [bulk mid-1800s].

This series consists primarily of documents relating to land sales and estate settlements. The land survey and deeds concern properties, mainly on South Buffalo Creek, bought and sold by various members of the Wilson family (3:2, 3:4). The estate records consist of inventories of personal property, lists of debts and expenditures, and receipts relating to the estates of Robert Wilson (Andrew William Wilson's father), Valentine Cobb (probably Barbara Wilson's father), Andrew Gamble, and Barbara Wilson (3:3). Also included in the series are receipts from McDuffie-Eubanks Drug Co. and St. Leo's Hospital (3:7).

4. Military. 16 folders (ca. 60 items). 1917-1982 [bulk 1940s].

Although some Civil War commemorative items and imprints from the World War I are contained in this series, the majority of the materials relate to the World War II. Military records, imprints and ephemera predominate, and items include decorations, orders, albums, and programs

from the Army Air Forces service of William Maxwell Wilson. Among these items are William Maxwell Wilson's identification tags (4:13-14). His letters from the war can be found in 1:10.

5. Miscellaneous. 6 folders (21 items). 1869-1938, n.d.

The miscellaneous items include the autograph of Doug Corrigan (5:1), a coloring book owned by Peggy O'Connell (5:2), and a resolution made by Union Lodge No. 173 upon the death of A.L. Gamble (5:6). The genealogical materials consist of handwritten notes, photocopies from Ozama Murr O'Connell's Bible, and the family trees of Amanda Denny (who was descended from Nellie McAdoo Ryan) and Robert Wilson (5:4). In 1938, when local students were dismissed from school to attend the first Greater Greensboro Open golf tournament, Peggy O'Connell obtained the autographs of several players, including Sam Snead and Ben Hogan (5:5).

6. Photographs. 9 folders (ca. 80 items). ca. 1890s-1970.

This series contains a panorama of the First Presbyterian Church Smith Bible Class of 1922 accompanied by a list of those enrolled in the class (6:9). The portraits of Native Americans and photographs of a Wichita Indian village belonged to Virginia Moore O'Connell (1862-1951), who taught at a school for Native Americans (6:2-3). Also found in this series are a substantial number of black and white photos and negatives of railway engines and turntables, as well as some train cars and depots, throughout North Carolina and the South (6:4-8).

7. Printed Materials. 28 folders (ca. 80 items). 1844-1981 [bulk 1914-1945].

The printed materials include books, certificates, pamphlets, programs, newspapers, and yearbooks. The children's book entitled *Grandfather Daniel and his Bible* belonged to Rufus W. Wilson (7:5), and William A. Donnell, Esq. owned *The North Carolina Form Book* (7:15). A *Practical System for the Sale of Patent Rights* belonged to Robert Wilson, who patented an "Inclined Plane Water Wheel" on September 28, 1875, according to a handwritten note inside the front cover (7:20).

Many items relate to the educations of Peggy O'Connell and William Maxwell Wilson in Greensboro. Included are his report cards from junior and senior high school (7:6), and her diplomas from St. Benedict's School (7:26), Greensboro Senior High (7:7), and the Woman's College (7:28). Of particular note for researchers interested in Greensboro Senior High are yearbooks (1915, 1918; 7:23-24), student handbooks (1937-1941; 7:7), and student newspapers (1937-1941; 7:8).

Materials relating to First Presbyterian Church include an April 1914 membership directory with a brief history of the church, certificates of promotion, lists of men from the church who served in World War II, and the order of services for the mortgage burning on May 6, 1945 (7:4). A pamphlet published by the Chamber of Commerce in 1915 contains facts about Greensboro and statistics showing its growth since 1900 (7:2). Also included in the series are a Southern Railway mileage book in a case from "Clegg's European Hotel" (7:25), and the constitution and by-laws of the Touchdown Club (7:27).

8. Scrapbook. 7 folders (ca. 50 items). ca. 1750-1950.

This dissembled scrapbook contains miscellaneous materials such as Nellie McAdoo Ryan's wedding ring (ca. 1750; 8:3), Andrew William Wilson's Oath to the Union (8:4), and financial documents, some of which relate to the estate records in series 3 (see 3:3; 8:2, 8:7). Of particular note are three letters from Robert Wilson, a private in Company A of the 53rd North Carolina Infantry Regiment, which surrendered with Lee at Appomattox Court House. Two of these letters were composed at a Richmond hospital in September 1863 (8:1). A poem entitled "The Soldiers' Sufferings," dated March 10, 1863, is said to have been composed by the Guilford Guards regiment stationed on Marye's Heights in Fredericksburg, Virginia (8:6). Two photographs of the offices of Thomas & Howard Co. on South Davie Street include Maxwell Morehead Wilson (1921-1922), while another photograph shows attorneys A.L. Brooks, O.L. Sapp, Leroy Shuping, and S. Clay Williams (1913; 8:5).

FOLDER LISTING

Series	Folder	Contents	
1	1	Correspondence	-- Donnell, Amanda C. (1886-1912)
	2	"	-- Donnell, W.A. (1871, 1878)
	3	"	-- Gamble, Andrew M. (1864-1869)
	4	"	-- Hall, Russell F. (1916-1969)
	5	"	-- O'Connell, Peggy (1937-1945)
	6	"	-- Postcards (1905-1918)
	7	"	-- Unknown recipient
	8	"	-- Wilson, Mary Banks (1950)
	9	"	-- Wilson, Maxwell Morehead (1911-1945)
	10	"	-- Wilson, M.M. and Rosa Brooks (1911-1945)
	11	"	-- Wilson, William Maxwell (1941, 1944)
2	1	Currency	-- Bank of Fayetteville (1861, 1863, n.d.)
	2	"	-- Bank of Wadesborough (1859?)
	3	"	-- Confederate States of America (1863, 1864)
	4	"	-- Greensboro Mutual (1852, 1862, 1863)
	5	"	-- State of North Carolina (1861-1864)
	6	"	-- Wallet
3	1	Financial & Legal	-- Account Book (1860s-1870s)
	2	"	-- Deeds (1795-1874, bulk mid-1800s)
	3	"	-- Estates (1834-1878)
	4	"	-- Land Survey (1799)
	5	"	-- Miscellaneous (1865)
	6	"	-- Promissory Notes (1829-1873)
	7	"	-- Receipts (1919-1941)
4	1	Military	-- Civil War -- Confederate Memorial Service (Event program, 1969)

Series	Folder	Contents
4	2	Military -- Civil War -- United Confederate Veterans 61 st Reunion (Event program and lapel pin, 1951)
	3	“ -- World War I -- “Over the Top / For You / Buy U.S. Gov’t Bonds...” (poster, 1918)
	4	“ -- World War I -- Registration and induction (Wilson, M.M., 1917, 1918)
	5	“ -- World War I -- <i>Why We Are at War</i> (1917)
	6	“ -- World War I -- <i>The World’s Greatest War</i> (<i>Raleigh Times</i> special issue, 1917)
	7	“ -- World War II -- <i>20th Air Force Album</i> (1982)
	8	“ -- World War II -- 444 th Bombardment Group (1945, 1946)
	9	“ -- World War II -- <i>Alert!</i> (Army Air Forces periodical)
	10	“ -- World War II -- <i>Amarillo Army Air Field</i> (Army Air Forces publication)
	11	“ -- World War II -- Naval battle (photograph, 1942)
	12	“ -- World War II -- U.S. Defense savings bonds album (1940s)
	13	“ -- World War II -- Wilson, W.M. -- Miscellaneous (1944-1946, 1962) (folder 1 of 2)
	14	“ -- World War II -- Wilson, W.M. -- Miscellaneous (1944-1946, 1962) (folder 2 of 2)
	15	“ -- World War II -- Wilson, W.M. -- Registration and immunization (1942)
	16	“ -- World War II -- Wilson, W.M. -- Service records (1943-1946)
5	1	Miscellaneous
	2	“ -- Coloring Book
	3	“ -- First Presbyterian Church (ca. 1910)
	4	“ -- Genealogy
	5	“ -- Greater Greensboro Open (autographs; 1938, n.d.)
	6	“ -- Resolution (1869)
6	1	Photographs -- Miscellaneous -- Negatives
	2	“ -- Native Americans -- Portraits (ca. 1890s)
	3	“ -- Native Americans -- Village (ca. 1890s)
	4	“ -- Railroads -- East Tennessee and Western North Carolina (ca. 1962)
	5	“ -- Railroads -- Miscellaneous (1951-1970)
	6	“ -- Railroads -- Negatives
	7	“ -- Railroads -- Norfolk & Western
	8	“ -- Railroads -- Southern Railway (1939-1948)
	9	“ -- Smith Bible Class (1916)
7	1	Printed Materials -- <i>As I Remember---</i> (<i>A Boy in the ‘Twenties</i>) (by Roy Griffin; 1967)

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
7	2	Printed Materials -- Chamber of Commerce (1915)
	3	“ -- Eastern Air Transport Inc. (time table; 1930)
	4	“ -- First Presbyterian Church (1914-1945)
	5	“ -- <i>Grandfather Daniel and His Bible</i> (American Tract Society, 186?)
	6	“ -- Greensboro Public Schools (report cards; 1933-1939)
	7	“ -- Greensboro Senior High School (student handbooks, etc.; 1937-1941)
	8	“ -- <i>High Life</i> (Greensboro Senior High School student newspaper; 1937-1941)
	9	“ -- Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Co. (financial statement; 1915)
	10	“ -- <i>The Making of a Man</i> (by William Jennings Bryan; 1914)
	11	“ -- Memorial Cards -- Brooks family (1899-1924)
	12	“ -- Miscellaneous (ca. 1900s)
	13	“ -- Newspaper Clippings (ca. 1930-1981) *Boar & Castle; National Theatre; Pomona Roundhouse; White Oak Mill
	14	“ -- Norfolk & Western Railway (pamphlet; n.d.)
	15	“ -- <i>The North Carolina Form Book</i> ,... (1844)
	16	“ -- <i>The Official Guide of the Railways</i> ... (1933)
	17	“ -- “The Order of the Field Daisy” (by Max Tull Payne; n.d.)
	18	“ -- <i>Pine Needles</i> (Woman’s College yearbook; 1942)
	19	“ -- Pleasant Garden School (1922-1923)
	20	“ -- <i>A Practical System for the Sale of Patent Rights</i> ... (1875)
	21	“ -- <i>The Prince of Peace</i> (by William Jennings Bryan; 1909)
	22	“ -- Programs (1935, n.d.) *Leo Byrum’s University of the Dance; Junior Woman’s Club
	23	“ -- <i>The Reflector</i> (Greensboro High School yearbook; 1915)
	24	“ -- <i>The Sage</i> (Greensboro High School yearbook; 1918)
	25	“ -- Southern Railway (mileage book; 1914)
	26	“ -- St. Benedict’s School (1938)
	27	“ -- Touchdown Club (ca. 1940s)
	28	“ -- Woman’s College (1945)
8	1	Scrapbook -- Correspondence (1863-1917)
	2	“ -- Inventories and expenses (1834-1876)
	3	“ -- Miscellaneous (ca. 1750, 1860s, n.d.)
	4	“ -- Oath to the Union (1865)

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>	
8	5	Scrapbook	-- Photographs (1913-1950)
	6	“	-- Printed materials (1863-1926)
	7	“	-- Receipts (1834-1891)

APPENDIX

<u>Location</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Denomination</u>	<u>Number of bills</u>
2:1	1861	Bank of Fayetteville	\$1	1
2:1	1863	Bank of Fayetteville	\$1	1
2:1	No date	Bank of Fayetteville	\$1	1
2:2	1859?	Bank of Wadesborough	\$5	1
2:3	1863	Confederate States of America	50¢	1
2:3	1864	Confederate States of America	\$5	5
2:3	1864	Confederate States of America	\$10	1
2:4	1852	Greensboro Mutual	25¢	2
2:4	1862	Greensboro Mutual	50¢	1
2:4	1863	Greensboro Mutual	50¢	1
2:5	1861	The State of North Carolina	5¢	1
2:5	1863	The State of North Carolina	5¢	3
2:5	1861	The State of North Carolina	10¢	2
2:5	1862	The State of North Carolina	10¢	13
2:5	1863	The State of North Carolina	10¢	9
2:5	1863	The State of North Carolina	25¢	5
2:5	1862	The State of North Carolina	25¢	2
2:5	1864	The State of North Carolina	25¢	2
2:5	1861	The State of North Carolina	50¢	2
2:5	1862	The State of North Carolina	50¢	1
2:5	1863	The State of North Carolina	\$1	6
2:5	1863	The State of North Carolina	\$2	5
2:5	1861	The State of North Carolina	\$2	1
2:5	1863	The State of North Carolina	\$3	2