

New Hanover County Public Library - North Carolina Room

Bill Reaves Collection Family Files – Subject Files – Block Books

A Finding Aid

Repository:

North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Public Library

Contact Information:

North Carolina Room
New Hanover County Public Library
201 Chestnut Street
Wilmington, NC 28401
Phone: 910-798-6305
URL: <http://www.nhcgov.com/LIB/LIBmain.asp>

Creator:

William M. Reaves, 1934-2000

Title:

Bill Reaves Collection, Family Files

Quantity:

Family Files Series I: 85 bound volumes
Family Files, Series II: 49 Boxes
Subject Files: 15 large lateral file drawers plus 45 archival storage boxes.
Block Books: ~30 3-ring binders
Note that indexing and recovery triage on these files is not complete. 2/2006

Abstract:

The archival collection consists principally of dated clippings cut by Bill Reaves over a 30 year period from newspapers of Wilmington, North Carolina and the surrounding areas, dating from 1860 to 1999, plus files based on those clippings typed and arranged by Mr. Reaves, with additional material collected by Mr. Reaves from a variety of other local sources. Mr. Reaves donated the collection to the NHCPL in 1999.

Processed by:

Family Files Series I: Ken Davis 2003, and others
Family Files Series II: Pete Ambler, 2003-2004, and others
Subject Files: Pete Ambler, 2004-2006, Jean Henderson, and others

The Bill Reaves Collection

The Reaves Collection, compiled by Bill Reaves, of Wilmington, North Carolina, was donated to the North Carolina Room of the New Hanover County Public Library during the 1990s. The collection came about in 1971 when Mr. Reaves was an employee of the *Wilmington Star-News* and keeper of the "newspaper morgue." Fortunately he was able to salvage to a large extent 100+ years of newspapers when the company decided to have them destroyed. The bound volumes of newspapers found their way to his home and from there began a most unusual collection of Lower Cape Fear historical and genealogical materials, a compilation which consumed the rest of his life.

Mr. Reaves spent thirty years clipping the old newspapers, then dating, cross indexing and filing the clippings. He generated individual file folders for local history subjects, local buildings, local addresses, local organizations and family (surname) files. These folders have benefited numerous museums, galleries, researchers and historical institutions around the state and country. Some clippings date back to the mid and late 1800's.... Mr. Reaves also added clippings from the newspapers of the 1970's, 80's and 90's.

Wilmington newspapers reported events happening not only in New Hanover County but also in the surrounding counties - Brunswick, Duplin, Pender, Onslow, Columbus, Bladen, Sampson, Robeson and Wayne. Clippings often include news from Fayetteville, Southport, Elizabethtown, Delco, Whiteville, Jacksonville, Burgaw, Wrightsville Beach, Carolina Beach, Kure Beach, and other nearby communities. A few significant clippings of national interest were also saved.

It was the wish of Mr. Reaves, and is the hope of the Library, that this collection will help the genealogist find vital and interesting information that cannot be found elsewhere. In the search of his own family Mr. Reaves said, "I have found both famous and infamous, rich and poor, the educated and illiterate, the Union and Confederate, and I cherish every 'skeleton' that I have found in my many closets."

Bill Reaves Family Files, Series I

About 1990, Mr. Reaves began the unbelievable task of typing up his Family Files. This required putting the newspaper clippings and other items he had collected for a particular surname in chronological order, then typing the text of the articles, and then adding an every name index to the larger of the individual surname files. Mr. Reaves died in 2000, having completed typing over 900 individual family files – in 2003 these records were arranged and indexed by J. Kenneth Davis and bound as the *Bill Reaves Family Files, Series I* – 85 volumes, in the collection of the North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Public Library.

The Bill Reaves Family Files, Series II

Thousands more files are still in the form of dated clippings, sorted by family name - and included are additional clippings for the files he had previously typed as the clipping project continued after individual files were typed. These files form the *Bill Reaves Family Files, Series II*.

Today the *Family Files Series II* collection consists of 49 file boxes with 6800+ files sorted by surname. Approximately 30% of the files (mostly smaller ones) have been organized and assembled on archival paper. Files for surnames with only one collated page are grouped in folders; larger files are in individual surname folders.

Each individual box has an alphabetical surname index. Folders for the one page surnames are placed ahead of the respective larger folders. Clippings are filed in folders by what Mr. Reaves considered to be the principle surname in the article. It is not always clear why which one of possibly many surnames was picked for filing a given clipping. Where more than one surname is present in the clipping there may or may not be cross references filed in the folders for the other surnames.

A searchable cumulative surname folder index is online on the website for the Old New Hanover Genealogical Society, www.onhgs.org.

*These indexes are for surname only and are **not** every name indexes.*

Block Books

As he accumulated of clippings from scattered years, Mr. Reaves began sorting them by Wilmington street address. The addresses were, reasonably enough, generally in the older parts of the city. The clippings for each address were then mounted on separate pages, and then organized in binders by street, by address. This process continued for some time. As a result the clippings for any one address are not in chronological order.

The clippings include property sales and building permits as well as family items (obituaries, marriages, etc.), business advertisements and city news (e.g., street construction) related to a specific address

The Block Book file permits a serious researcher of demographics to understand neighborhood relationships as well as understanding the sequential sales of a given piece of property over time and construction dates for various buildings.

A researcher of a specific surname is best served to use the City Directories (also in the North Carolina Room, NHCPL) for reference to determine what Block Book pages to examine.

Visitors to the Library may research in these files. Individual pages must be requested with the assistance of the Staff. There is no comprehensive surname or subject index for the Block Books.

After following the Block Book plan for some time, Mr. Reaves rethought his filing approach and instead began sorting most clippings by surname, for the Family Files, with others sorted by Subject for the Subject files. From that point in time these Block Books were seldom added to.

Caveats:

Mr. Reaves did not make any attempt to separate families with the same surname, therefore, it is up to the researcher to use the information to the best advantage. Similar sounding surnames or surnames with variant spellings may or may not have been collected in the same folder.

Not every article was necessarily clipped and saved, nor are clippings for every newspaper issue or even every year captured in these files. Some of the newspapers were so deteriorated as to be unusable. Some articles would necessarily be lost by being on the back side of a clipped page. Some articles are incomplete. Some files contain hundreds of clippings, while others may have only two or three.

Mr. Reaves included frequent cross-references - following these will require examining additional surname files. In many cases the original news article can be found in the NHCPL newspaper microfilm collection.

Mr. Reaves had separate files for African-American families because he used these records to help compile his major 1998 work, *Strength Through Struggle: The Chronological and Historical Record of the African-American Community in Wilmington, NC, 1865-1950*. Some clippings may mistakenly be in the General files instead of the African -American files, and visa-versa. For the sake of completeness it is recommended that both files be examined.

Access:

Family File Series I: Bound copies on the open stack shelves in the North Carolina Room, NHCPL.

Family File Series II: Folders available upon request in the North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Public Library. One file at a time may be requested for use within the room. Clippings in uncollated files are in random order. Individual clippings are very fragile and require great care in handling. Photocopies or photos (no flash) may be made of clippings or pages.

Subject Files: Folders available upon request for use in the North Carolina Room. One file at a time may be requested for use within the room. Clippings in uncollated files are in random order. Individual clippings are very fragile and require great care in handling. Photocopies or photos (no flash) may be made of clippings or pages provided they are not too fragile to handle..

Block Books: Pages for individual addresses are available upon request for use within the North Carolina Room.

Newspapers on microfilm

In the North Carolina Room of the New Hanover Public Library there are microfilms of many of the papers Mr. Reaves used in building his collection. It is often useful to cross check any clippings of interest in the microfilm for the referenced date and nearby dates to determine if there is additional information available. For a list of available microfilms of newspapers see the ONHGS website.....

A word about the source newspapers

The newspapers during various periods published various editions. An example: the Star News published a local edition and an edition which was sent out of town. Even today different insert sections may be used for various distributions.

The result of this is that some clippings may be from one edition and not appear in the same form in others, if at all. Cross references may be applicable to one edition and not in an other. In particular be aware that the microfilm editions of the newspaper are from the 'out of town' edition while the clippings are believed to be primarily from local editions. Thus the cross reference may or may not be valid in locating an article in the microfilm.

Abbreviations Used:

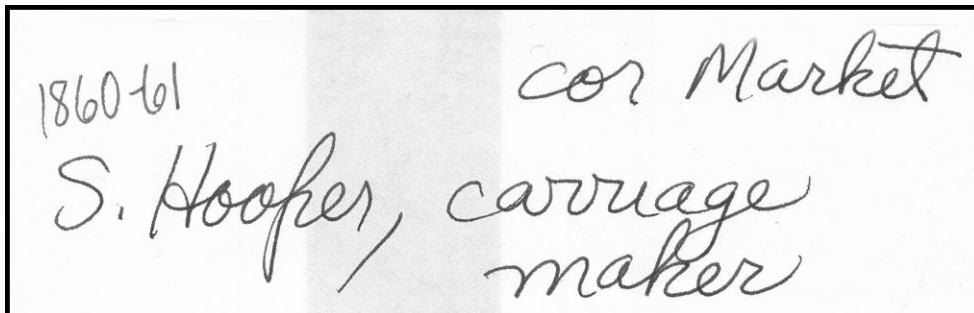
The dated newspaper clippings generally have a letters following the date that indicate the newspaper:

S – Daily Star; Star News
WS – Weekly Star
M – Wilmington Messenger
WM – Weekly Messenger
SWS – Semi-weekly Star
J – Wilmington Journal
P – Wilmington Post
D – Wilmington Dispatch
N – Wilmington News
WMS – Wilmington Morning Star

Cross References and Sources

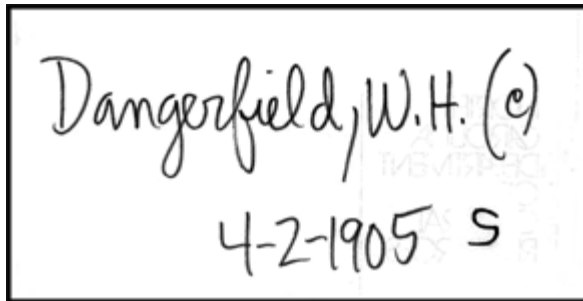
Cross references are in many cases somewhat cryptic. Here is a guide.

Hand written cross references with an address or location, perhaps with no date, generally are City Directory references:

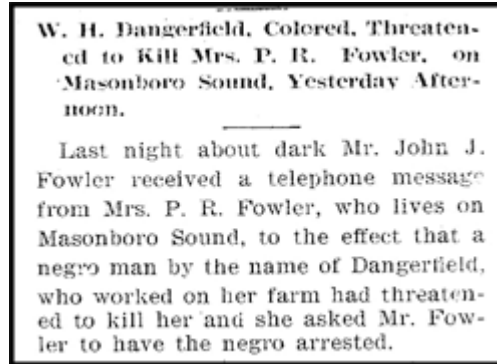


(Mr. Reaves prepared an Index for the 1860-1861 City Directory; many of these slips are from his working files for that project.)

Handwritten cross references with a date only generally are **newspaper references**, the newspaper key may or may not be included. Here is an example of a cross reference slip and the corresponding clipping from the *Star*, 04-02-1905:



Dangerfield, W.H. (c)
4-2-1905 S



W. H. Dangerfield, Colored, Threatened to Kill Mrs. P. R. Fowler, on Masonboro Sound, Yesterday Afternoon.

Last night about dark Mr. John J. Fowler received a telephone message from Mrs. P. R. Fowler, who lives on Masonboro Sound, to the effect that a negro man by the name of Dangerfield, who worked on her farm had threatened to kill her and she asked Mr. Fowler to have the negro arrested.

The cross reference is on the left, the actual clipping on the right, above. Note that, as shown in this example, that some of the more cryptic references in both Series I and Series II files reflect Mr. Reaves often-exercised choice to not include details of unpleasant events, while still retaining the reference.

(This same news article was also referenced in the Fowler Family file.)

Cross references may refer to the same article mentioned, or a different article on the same page or even to an article on the BACK of the article referenced – and the back side may not include the entire article referenced..

Remember one copy of each newspaper was available for clipping, thus forcing Mr. Reaves to select which side of each newspaper page to use in the collection. When the clippings are mounted of course the back side of the article is no longer available for immediate viewing. In these cases the microfilms can often be used to good advantage. However, see also the above note regarding various newspaper editions. The NHCPL owns bound copies of (mostly) a limited number of the local editions that can be referenced by special arrangement. These are not immediately available and must be specially requested.

Depending upon the source used, Mr. Reaves might indicate known African-American individuals using (C), as in the above example or, in other cases, with an asterisk.

Handwritten cross references to another file may be references to clippings in other **Reaves Files**: another **Family file**, or his **Subject files** or his **Block books**.

Hayes, Grace, Mrs
see Helburn file
4-29-1941 S

Family File

Hayes, J.W.
see Whiteville
1-15-1913 S

Subject File

Hayes, Fannie, Mrs
5, 5th St. Bk
(cor. Wooster)
2-10-1886 S

Block Book

There are many typed and hand written slips identified as census entries (or which can be identified as such by content). The year is not always given.

References to the **NHCPL North Carolina Room Vertical Files** are generally indicated as such with a shorthand reference: "see NC Vert." or "see Vert."

Typed material with brief chronological personal information, often with an added handwritten notation 'Attys,' are from the publication *Attorneys of New Hanover County 1724-1978* (Crockette W. Hewlett and Leora H. McEachern; ONHGS, 1979).

WHITT, SAMUEL C. (1946-)	
b. 1946	
p.	
m. Teresa A. ("Terry")	
r. 3009 Newkirk Ave.	
prep. ed.: Mount St. Mary's Col., Emmitsburg, Md (BS)	Mart-Hub.1974
legal ed.: Catholic U. of America, Washington, D.C. (JD)	ibid
1972 Adm. to bar	ibid
1973- Atty.	ibid, 1973, 1974
1976 WHITT & WHITTEN	Murchison Bldg. First-Union Nat.Bk. 1976-tel.dir.

Clippings from a printed source citing early dates – the 1700's – are from *Abstract of North Carolina Wills* (J. Bryan Grimes, compiler; Trustees of Public Libraries, 1910).

RELFE, THOMAS. ROLFE
April 10, 1704. No probate. Wife and Executrix: MARY. Son: THOMAS. Daughter: DOROTHY RELFE. Other legatee: WILLIAM ROADS. Witnesses: JOHN BISHOP, ROBERT KEEL, MARY BISHOP.

Typed clippings that have content indicating medical profession are from *The Lonely Road – a History of the Physicks and Physicians of the Lower Cape Fear 1735-1976* (Published by the Research and Romance of Medicine Committee of the Auxiliary to the Medical Society of New Hanover, Brunswick and Pender Counties (N.C.); 1977).

ROLF, ROGER

circa 1737

m. Ann

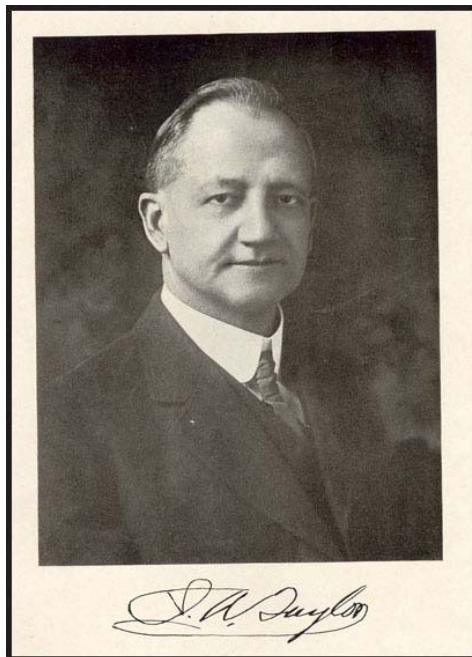
t.o.p.: pvt - GP and S

service: New Liverpool 1736; Newton 1737; Newton 1740

notable: one of the earliest physicians in area; little known of him other than he bought and sold property, listing himself as "Physician" and "Surgeon", and that on 13 June 1739 juror Rufus Marsden was excused from jury duty by virtue of a health certificate by Dr. Rolf. See text

source: Record Bk. AB p 85, 86, 141, 195, 303; N.H. Co. Ct. Minutes 13 June 1739; IBK; Med. in N.C., Vol I, p 180

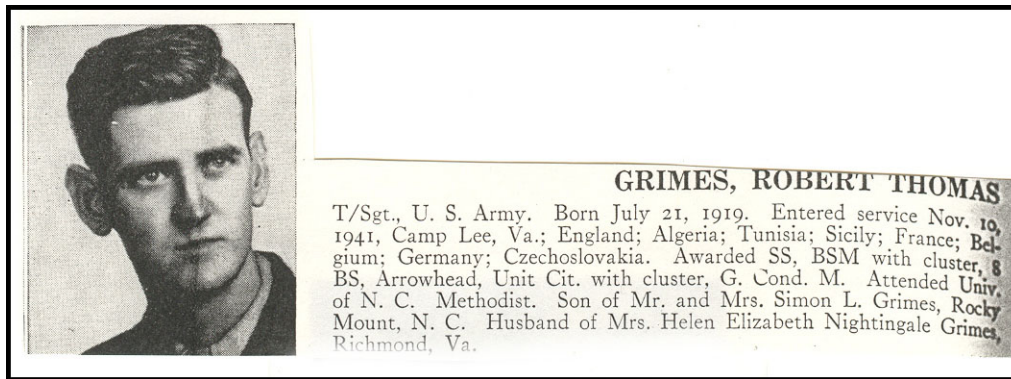
Formal full page portraits of civic leaders, with no text but generally with a facsimile signature, are from the book *History of North Carolina* (No author; Lewis Publishing Company, 1919). A generally laudatory biographical article on the individual usually accompanies the photo in the book; this text may or may not be in the file.



Typed excerpts from a record starting with a number in the following form are records typed from the microfilms of the Freedman's Bank Records in *North Carolina Freedman's Saving and Trust Company Records* (Bill Reaves, edited by Beverly Tetterton; North Carolina Genealogical Society, Raleigh; 1992)

No. 6992.
Record for John W. Rudge. Date- June 4, 1873. Born in France. Raised in North Carolina. Residence- Hanover Street. Age 35. White complexion. Occupation- Tinsmith. Wife- C.V.R. Child- B.S.R. Father- (dead). Mother- Louisa R. Brothers and Sisters - M.B. Full signature by the applicant.

Photos of World War II era service men, identified and with brief family information are from *Young American Patriots - The Youth of North Carolina in World War II*, (no author; National Publishing Company, 1948)



Full pages of data typed on a form with the heading "Inventory of Black Historical Sites" (below, left) are forms collected in the preparation of *A Survey of Black Historical Sites in Wilmington, New Hanover County, North Carolina* (Edward F. Turberg; City of Wilmington, 1983). Copies of the finished pages (below, right) are also found in some files. This survey and the publication were done under contract from the City. The published book may contain more or less information than the form. (Publication was limited to perhaps four copies; a copy is available in the North Carolina Room of the NHCPL)

INVENTORY OF BLACK HISTORICAL SITES IN WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA: CHECKLIST

PROPERTY NAME Richardson House ADDRESS 720 Orange Street (moved to Chandler Wharf comp

BLOCK _____ LOT _____ CONSTRUCTED c1880 ALTERED 1970s DEMOLISHED (Moved)

STANDING DEMOLISHED BUT PHOTO/ILLUSTRATION AVAILABLE
 PHOTO DATE: _____ SOURCE: _____

GREATLY ALTERED STYLE: _____

OWNED BY BLACKS WHO AND WHEN: _____

DESIGNED BY BLACKS " : _____

BUILT BY BLACKS " : _____

OCCUPIED BY BLACKS " : _____

OPERATED BY BLACKS " : _____

EMPLOYED BLACKS " : _____

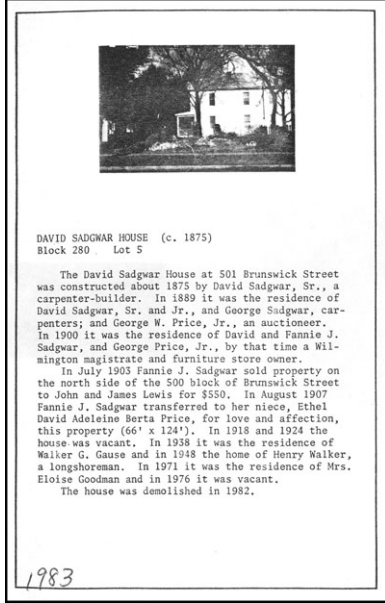
USED BY BLACKS PURPOSE AND WHEN: _____

BLACK EVENT WHAT AND WHEN: _____

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE: This house lost its identity as a former black residence when it was moved to Chandler's Wharf.
 In CD1889-90 it is the residence of J. E. Richardson, a tinner by trade.
 In CD1918, it is the residence of Laura E. Richardson.
 In June, 1922, Laura Richardson, a well known nurse, died here. Funeral from St.Luke's A.M.E.Zion Church.
 In CD1924 thru CD1971 it is the residence of Mrs. Blanche R. Meares, possibly Blanche Richardson Meares?
 In CD1976 this house is vacant.

HISTORICAL

ARCHITECTURAL



A side note: As Mr. Reaves went about the task of clipping and creating cross references he was chronically short of paper. The result was that cross references are on pieces of paper cut from scrap computer records, advertising brochures and even his campaign posters (he ran for mayor in 19xx) and backs of his cancelled checks.

Mr. Reaves' home became one large work space with box after box for the filing and sorting process. Mr. Reaves prepared (sorted and typed) many individual 'mini' summaries of clippings upon request from individuals and in return was sent a variety of data in different forms by many he corresponded with – much this found its way into his Family Files.

He did have some volunteer helpers, "Bill's Girls," notably Mary Shannon, Susie Carson, Francie ____, and Beverly Tetterton. Mark Wilde-Ramsey and Richard Lawrence spent countless hours moving and again moving the somewhat peripatetic Mr. Reaves and his enormous collection.

Revised 2/8/2006 psa b