

**Military Collection**  
**State Archives of North Carolina**

**Thomas R. Darden Papers (WWI 16)**  
[World War I]

**Collection Number:** WWI 16

**Title:** Thomas R. Darden Papers

**Dates:** 1903, 1917-1923, 1925

**Creator:** Thomas R. Darden; Fred A. Olds.

**Abstract**

The Thomas R. Darden Papers document the military service of Thomas Ricaud Darden of Raleigh, North Carolina, in the U.S. Navy prior to World War I, and in the U.S. Army 301st Heavy Battalion, U.S. Army Tank Corps, during World War I. The collection also contains records of Darden's time as the Washington, D.C., news correspondent for the *New York World* newspaper prior to World War I. The materials also provide insight into the health problems suffered by Darden after World War I due to injuries suffered in the war. The Darden Papers includes letters, correspondence, news clippings and articles, military service records, military discharge documents, financial records, and miscellaneous materials.

**Physical Description:** 12 folders

**Language(s):** English, French

**Repository**

State Archives of North Carolina, 4614 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, N.C. 27699-4614

**Restrictions on Access:** There are no restrictions on accessing this collection.

**Restrictions on Use:** There are no restrictions on the use of this collection.

**Preferred Citation**

[Item name or title], [Folder Numbers], Thomas R. Darden Papers, WWI 16, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, N.C.

## **Acquisition**

The materials in this collection were donated, along with artifacts (now held by the North Carolina Museum of History), to the North Carolina Historical Commission's Hall of History on January 31, 1931, by Thomas R. Darden's step-mother Martha Elizabeth Creech Darden, following Thomas' father's death in 1930. According to a report by Fred A. Olds, Hall of History Collector, in the 1930-1932 North Carolina Historical Commission Biennial Report, Olds noted that "many World War relics of Captain Thomas Richard Darden, of the U. S. Tank Corps, [were] left by him to the Hall of History." When the North Carolina Department of Archives and History was formed, the materials in this collection were transferred from the Museum to the State Archives, and added to the WWI Papers.

## **Separated Material**

A field survey map of a section of France showing the location of enemy trenches (dated 1918) was removed from this collection, and relocated to the Military Collection WWI Maps Collection as MilColl.WWI.Maps.172.

## **Processing Information**

The materials in this collection were originally stored in two file folders, without any delineation as to the records subject content or purpose. Most of the items in the collection have suffered extreme wear and tear over the years, with one document being torn and missing a portion of paper. Items were divided into more folders, in order to spread the damaged documents into smaller groupings to prolong their physical stability. The collection originally was owned by the North Carolina Historical Commission's Hall of History, and the documents were put on display in the Hall's exhibit cases. Each document has written on the front or back in black ink a six or seven digit number, which was a catalog number for the Hall of History's materials. The numbers do not correspond to any original order, and no effort was made to put the records in catalog-number order.

Newspaper articles and clippings were photocopied as preservation copies, and are marked as such on the copies. Some of the documents were archivally laminated sometime between the 1940s and 1960s by the North Carolina Department of Archives and History, as was the preservation practice of the day. Thomas Darden's address book was originally in a small leather binder. The address book pages were removed from this leather binder due to the brittleness of the binder's covering. The address book pages were retained in their original order, including the alphabetical tabbed divider pages.

**Processed by:** Matthew M. Peek, July 2015

**Arrangement:** The collection is arranged in twelve folders, based on the records purpose or subject content. The collection is arranged chronologically, and within each folder the records are organized in chronological order.

## Biographical Note

Thomas Ricaud Darden was born on September 25, 1888, in Wilmington, North Carolina, to John Green (1845-1930) and Martha Emma Bowen Darden (1861-1903). The Dardens lived in Wilmington until 1897, when they moved to Raleigh, North Carolina, where they lived off Peace Street. While living in Raleigh, John Darden worked as an insurance agent for the Life Insurance Company of Virginia.

On January 17, 1903, Thomas Darden—with the complicity of his father—lied about his age to join the U.S. Navy. In January 1903, Thomas was actually 15 years old, and stated on his official records that he was born on September 25, 1887—which made him 16 years old and eligible for naval service with his parents' permission. Darden served for five years in the Navy, being discharged with the rank of seaman on September 24, 1908.

After his naval service, Thomas Darden would go on to work as the Washington, D.C., press correspondent for the *New York World* newspaper, one of the most popular newspapers in America. Darden covered activities in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate, becoming a member of the National Press Club. During his time in Washington, Darden became acquainted with or friends with numerous U.S. congressmen, including: future Republican President Warren G. Harding; Harding's future Attorney General Harry M. Daugherty; and Harding's future White House executive clerk Rudolph Foster.

In May 1917, Thomas Darden wrote his father that he decided to enlist in the U.S. Army, rather than waiting to be drafted. Thomas had to continue to lie about his age, however, as he put it to his father: "You know according to my naval age I will be 30 years old in September and as I will have to tell of that experience why of course the age will have to stick" (see Folder 2 for this letter). It took letters of recommendations from numerous high-profile politicians to have Darden examined and approved by the military examination board. Darden was appointed as a candidate for an officer's appointment, ordered to report on August 23, 1917, to the Reserve Officers Training Camp at Fort Meyer, Virginia. Later, he was transferred to Fort Meade in Maryland.

At Fort Meade, when his fellow soldiers complained about commutation quarters at the camp, Darden got on a train to Washington, and met with U.S. Secretary of War Newton D. Baker about the matter. This act won the respect of the men in his unit. Darden was assigned as a First Lieutenant in the 301st Heavy Battalion, Tank Corps. During the war, Thomas Darden would write letters to his father about the fighting and his experience, with Thomas' father having the letters published in the *Raleigh News and Observer* newspaper. He served in France with the 301st Heavy Battalion, which was attached to the 7th British Tank Battalion. In the Somme Offensive, Darden led a fleet of tanks against the Germans, receiving recognition for his distinguished service in that offensive.

Thomas Darden suffered physically from his time in combat, having been injured in at least one circumstance. Between January and March 1919, he had stays at Camp Hospital 40 in Liverpool, England; U.S. Army Embarkation Hospital No. 4 in New York City; and Walter Reed General Hospital in Washington, D.C. Darden was transferred into inactive service immediately on May 21, 1919, as a first lieutenant in the Quartermaster Section, U.S. Army Officers' Reserve Corps.

After the war, Darden attempted to resume his career as a reporter in Washington, D.C. He even sought and obtained a new officer's commission in the Reserve Corps as a captain. However, his health had been shattered by his war service. Darden left Washington in the late summer of 1922 with many letters of recommendation and introduction from high-ranking politicians and members of President Warren G. Harding's Cabinet.

Darden traveled to Arizona, where he stayed for a while at the U.S. Veterans Hospital No. 50 in Whipple Barracks, Arizona. U.S. Senator Ralph H. Cameron of Arizona wrote several personal introduction letters on Darden's behalf to the Governor of Arizona and several judges, asking them to extend any courtesies they could to Darden.

While in Arizona, Darden was encouraged by a news correspondent friend in the American Legion in Washington, D.C., to try writing an "insider's account" on the life of injured or sick veterans in U.S. Veterans Hospitals. Darden compiled the piece, but it was rejected by the editor of the American Legion's publication *The American Legion Weekly*.

While convalescing in Arizona, Darden also received a personal letter from Attorney General Harry M. Daugherty, who also was recovering from ill health and was very familiar with Darden as a news reporter. After April 1923, Darden had moved to Coronado Beach, California, trying a change of climate to help his health. He would never recover from the health issues that ailed him following the war. Thomas R. Darden died on October 6, 1923, in San Diego, California.

## **Scope and Content**

The collection includes letters and correspondence, photocopied news clippings and articles, military service records and discharge documents, financial and tax records, a train ticket, a small pocket Bible, an address book, and a small booklet. The materials document aspects of Darden's military service, journalism career, and post-war health issues. Of particular interest within this collection are letters of introduction written for Darden by the following individuals: Attorney General Harry W. Daugherty; Charles C. McChord, Interstate Commerce Commission chairman; President Harding's White House executive clerk Rudolph Foster; and Sen. Ralph H. Cameron of Arizona. A number of letters in the collection document the concern of Darden's friends as it relates to his post-war health conditions, and their sadness at the loss of his work as a political news correspondent for the *New York World* in Washington, D.C.

## **Subject Terms**

### **Persons/Families**

Cameron, Ralph H. (Ralph Henry), 1863-1953  
Darden, Thomas R. (Thomas Ricaud), 1888-1923  
Daugherty, H. M. (Harry Micajah), 1860-1941  
Foster, Rudolph  
McChord, Charles C.

### **Subject—Topical**

Fort George G. Meade (Md.)  
Life Insurance Company of Virginia  
Somme River Valley (France)  
United States. Army. Officers' Reserve Corps  
United States. Army. Tank Battalion, 301st  
Walter Reed Army Hospital (Washington, D.C.)  
Whipple Barracks (Ariz.)  
World (New York, N.Y. : 1860-1931)  
World War, 1914-1918--Military personnel--United States  
World War, 1914-1918--North Carolina  
World War, 1914-1918--United States—History

### **Material Types**

Correspondence  
Military records  
Training manuals

### **Collection Inventory**

<b>Folder</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Darden U.S. Navy Records	1903, 1917
2	Correspondence to John G. Darden	1917
3	Thomas Darden's Soldier's Pocket Bible	circa 1917
4	"Description of 'Eames Scale' as Applied to Bausch & Lomb Stereo Prism Binoculars	circa 1915
5	Darden U.S. Army Service Records	1917-1919
6	Thomas Darden Service Newspaper Articles	1918, undated
7	Military Leave Authorizations	1918
8	Medical Military Leave Records	January-February 1919
9	U.S. Army Officers' Reserve Corps Records	1919-1922

10	Thomas Darden Financial Records	1920-1922
11	Post-War Service Correspondence	1922-1923, 1925
12	Thomas Darden Address Book	Undated