

## **RANSON-HUNTER COLLECTION, 1848-1990**

**21.2 c.f. (34 document boxes, 5 flat boxes)**

### **ABSTRACT**

The Hunter and Ranson families were two of the earliest families who settled in what was originally known as "Craighead." In 1873, the town was renamed "Huntersville" for the Hunter family. These two families would join together through the 1890 marriage of William Joseph Ranson and Ellen Viola Hunter. The Ranson and Hunter families continued to influence the development of the Huntersville community throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The children of William and Ellen went on to serve their community through military service, church and organizational memberships, and career choices, and retained close ties to home.

The Ranson House, located at 412 South Old Statesville Road in Huntersville, built by William in 1913, was home for family members for years, and was eventually converted into apartments. After the last of William and Ellen's children, Nelle, died in 1999, her sister, Kate Ranson Cornue's children, Frederick and Virginia Cornue, inherited the home. In 2006, they made the decision to sell the property. Today it has been fully restored, and is listed as a Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Site.

This collection contains a wealth of information on the lives of two of the founding families of Huntersville from before the Civil War through the 1980s. There are several files on the genealogy of the Hunter and Ranson families, along with other families with whom they were closely tied. Correspondence between family members, friends, and associates reveal much about local events and family concerns. The majority of the Ranson family members' correspondence is from the children of William Joseph and Ellen. The Hunter family members' correspondence includes many accounts from the previous generation of Ellen, her siblings, and their parents. Other typical family records include club and organizational memberships, financial materials, obituaries and memorials, and receipts, in addition to other information particular to the person. General records include numerous files on Huntersville and Charlotte churches, clubs and organizations, colleges and universities, schools, and theatre groups.

### **ACCESS**

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## **PREFERRED CITATION**

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## **ACQUISITION**

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## **HISTORICAL NOTE**

Originally named “Craighead” for preacher Alexander Craighead, Huntersville was renamed in 1873 for the Hunter family. The Hunter and Ranson families were early settlers of the region and influential in many areas. They were both farmers who owned large tracts of land in and around Huntersville, which is where the original relationship between the families began. Reverend Alexander Ranson bought land from Robert Boston Hunter in order to hold church services, and these services would serve as the beginning of the first Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in Huntersville in 1875. (Reverend Ranson was the uncle of William Joseph, who later married Ellen Hunter.) The Hunters were also merchants, owning the first home and store along the railroad. Joseph Nicolas Hunter, brother of Robert Boston, served as the town’s first postmaster. In addition to dairy farming, the Ransons operated the Ranson Brothers Gin Company, Huntersville’s primary cotton gin.

William Joseph Ranson’s family came to the Huntersville area from South Carolina slightly later than the Hunters. His parents were Robert Henry (1828-1861) and Mary E. (Polly) Rice Ranson (1825-1893). Their children included: William Joseph (c. 1859-1943), Robert Marion (1854-1937), John James (1848-1904), Eliza Ann (1850-1924), and Lois Eunice (b. 1857).

Ellen’s grandparents, Robert Boston (1818-1902) and Rebecca Wilson Jones Hunter (1828-1892) were parents to several children: Andrew Jones (1845-1909), Mary J. Alphonse, William May (1850-1922), Rose Elizabeth (b. 1852), Laura Lavenia (b. 1855), Marcus Cyrus (1857-1936), Mary Louisa “Lula” (1860-1929), and Ira Parks. Andrew Jones married Harriet Isabella Sample and were the parents of Ellen Viola (1867-1936), Robert Leroy (1871-1904), Fred Sample (1873-1909), Minnie Rosa (1876-1878?),

Dallas Wilson (1870-1910), Louis Jones (1882-1978), Joe Adams (1886-1965), and Moffatt Ira (d. 1910).

The Ranson and Hunter families joined when William Joseph (W.J.) and Ellen Viola Hunter married in 1890. They would eventually have ten children: Lucius Hunter, (c. 1892-1958), John Oliver (c. 1894-1919), William Earl (c. 1895-1948), Paul Jones (c. 1897-1971), Robert Lacy (c. 1899-1962), (Murphy) Dale (c. 1902-1963), (Rebecca) Nelle (c. 1903-1999), Kathryn Isabel "Kate" (1906-1992), Donald Hunter (c. 1908-1994), and Dallas Jackson (c. 1911-1997).

Many of the young men of this family served their country during World War I, including John Oliver, who was killed in battle overseas. Each member would attend college, usually at either Erskine College in Due West, South Carolina, or the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. From Lucius' first day in 1910 through Virginia Cornue's graduation in 1967, there was a Ranson family member on campus at Chapel Hill. Most were heavily involved in sports, in particular track and field. Dale Ranson was the track coach at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, for 38 years. Some of the athletes he coached went on to become Olympians. The Ransons were also very involved in the church, in particular the Huntersville Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Many family members kept their ties to the church, and were eventually buried in the cemetery.

Several of the Ransons were influential in the Charlotte area as well. Lucius served as the Superintendent of Public Welfare for Mecklenburg County for a time. Robert Lacy was a member of the Mecklenburg County School Board and served during the consolidation into the Charlotte Mecklenburg School system. Ranson Middle School at 5850 Statesville Road in Charlotte was named for him. Nelle struggled with her eyesight throughout her life. Nearly blind herself, she worked for the North Carolina State Commission for the Blind for many years, helping others through many of the same issues she faced. Kate taught theatre for a number of children in schools throughout North Carolina, and eventually moved back to Charlotte with her two children, Frederick and Virginia Cornue. She continued teaching theatre in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School system, and later wrote articles for the *Mecklenburg Gazette*.

The Ranson-Hunter family had a definite impact on the development of Huntersville and its community. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, they helped to shape the look of their community through property deals, educational and social work, and commitment to a variety of organizations. Although many members of the family have passed on or moved away, reminders of their influence continue on in Huntersville and Charlotte.

## REFERENCES

Gray, Stewart. Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission. *Survey and Research Report on the Ranson House*.

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Ranson-Hunter Collection, 1848-1990

## RELATED MATERIALS

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Hunter, Fred C. *The Sunset Road*. Charlotte: [F.C. Hunter?], 1962. (CALL NUMBER: NCR 818.5)

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Ryan, Alma Lloyd Ranson. *Up and Doing: From 1915 to 1959*. Seattle: Keepsake Editions, 1998. (CALL NUMBER: NCR B RYAN)

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## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Ranson-Hunter Collection consists of items relating to the Ranson and Hunter families, along with many other documents primarily from Huntersville and Charlotte businesses, churches, schools, and people. The bulk of the collection is from 1880-1980, with some outliers. The overarching series includes Family Records, General Records, Photographs, Negatives, Slides, and Oversize Materials, with subseries as indicated below.

**Family Records, 1848-1990**, are divided into family group surnames of Alexander, Houston, Hunter, McAulay, Ranson, and Sample. The bulk of these records are from the Hunter and Ranson families. The surname records are then divided by individual names of the family members, and contain the available materials of each person, i.e., articles, clubs and organizations memberships, correspondence, obituaries and memorials, publications, receipts, school materials, and other related family materials.

**General Records, 1878-1989**, are divided into categories such as advertisements and brochures, churches, clubs and organizations, colleges and universities, ephemera, Mecklenburg County records, newsclippings, politics, publications, receipts, schools, and theatre.

**Photographs** consists primarily of Hunter and Ranson family members, friends, and associates. Also included are photographs of the Ranson home and businesses. The general photographs include pictures of Huntersville buildings, churches, related colleges and universities, and area schools.

**Negatives** consists primarily of Hunter and Ranson family members, friends, and associates. Also included are photographs of the Ranson home and businesses, along with community businesses and events.

**Slides** consists primarily of Ranson family members and the Ranson House.

**Oversize Materials**, include a variety of materials such as certificates, a hat worn by someone in the Ranson family, a pair of glasses, ledgers, newspapers, photographs, scrapbooks, and part of a wooden board from the Ranson property.

## SERIES LIST

### CONTENTS

Collection Container List

**BOX FOLDER**

1 1

## **Family Records, 1848-1990**

### **Alexander Family, n.d.**

|           |   |   |
|-----------|---|---|
| Genealogy | 1 | 2 |
| Histories | 1 | 3 |

### **Houston Family, n.d.**

|           |   |   |
|-----------|---|---|
| Genealogy | 1 | 4 |
|-----------|---|---|

### **Hunter Family, 1848-1980s**

#### General, 1906-1980s

|                              |   |   |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Articles, 1906-1980s         | 1 | 5 |
| Brochures, Hunter Clan, n.d. | 1 | 6 |
| Genealogy                    | 1 | 7 |
| Notes                        | 1 | 8 |
| Reunions, 1932               | 1 | 9 |

#### Agnes Johnson Hunter, 1906-1911

|                 |   |    |
|-----------------|---|----|
| Correspondence  |   |    |
| 1906-1908       | 1 | 10 |
| 1910-1911, n.d. | 1 | 11 |

#### Andrew Jones Hunter, 1862-1911

|                     |   |    |
|---------------------|---|----|
| Correspondence      |   |    |
| 1862-1899           | 1 | 12 |
| 1904-1909 and n.d.  | 1 | 13 |
| Deeds               | 1 | 14 |
| Land Map, 1893      | 1 | 15 |
| Policies            | 1 | 16 |
| Receipts            |   |    |
| 1888-1897           | 1 | 17 |
| 1900-1911           | 1 | 18 |
| Receipts, Tax, 1894 | 1 | 19 |

#### Dallas Wilson Hunter, 1897-1910

|                                    |   |    |
|------------------------------------|---|----|
| Clubs and Organizations, 1903-1909 | 1 | 20 |
| Correspondence                     |   |    |
| 1897-1899                          | 1 | 21 |
| 1901-1910 and n.d.                 | 1 | 22 |
| Financials, 1906                   | 1 | 23 |
| Obituaries and Memorials           | 1 | 24 |
| Receipts                           |   |    |
| 1901-1905                          | 1 | 25 |
| 1906-1910 and n.d.                 | 1 | 26 |
| Receipts, Insurance, 1902-1909     | 1 | 27 |
| Receipts, Tax, 1902-1909           | 1 | 28 |
| School Materials                   | 1 | 29 |

#### Emma Hunter, n.d.

|                          |   |   |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Obituaries and Memorials | 2 | 1 |
|--------------------------|---|---|

#### Fred Sample Hunter, 1903-1931

|   |   |    |
|---|---|----|
| Business Cards                            | 2 | 2  |
| Correspondence, 1903-1908, 1931, and n.d. | 2 | 3  |
| Policies                                  | 2 | 4  |
| Receipts, 1903-1909                       | 2 | 5  |
| Receipts, Tax, 1906-1907                  | 2 | 6  |
| Harriet Sample Hunter, 1878-1916          |   |    |
| Correspondence                            |   |    |
| 1878-1908                                 | 2 | 7  |
| 1910-1916                                 | 2 | 8  |
| Policies                                  | 2 | 9  |
| Receipts, 1907                            | 2 | 10 |
| Henry Hunter, 1867                        |   |    |
| Biographies                               | 2 | 11 |
| Receipts, 1867                            | 2 | 12 |
| Ida Hunter, 1916                          |   |    |
| Correspondence, 1916                      | 2 | 13 |
| James Leroy Hunter, 1906-1907             |   |    |
| Correspondence, 1906-1907                 | 2 | 14 |
| Paintings                                 | 2 | 15 |
| Joseph Adams Hunter, 1904-1918            |   |    |
| Correspondence, 1904-1918 and n.d.        | 2 | 16 |
| Receipts, 1906-1907                       | 2 | 17 |
| Receipts, Tax, 1908                       | 2 | 18 |
| Louis Jones Hunter, 1901-1936             |   |    |
| Correspondence                            |   |    |
| 1901                                      | 2 | 19 |
| 1902                                      | 2 | 20 |
| 1903                                      | 2 | 21 |
| 1904                                      | 2 | 22 |
| 1905 (1/2)                                | 2 | 23 |
| 1905 (2/2)                                | 3 | 1  |
| 1906-1909                                 | 3 | 2  |
| 1910-1914                                 | 3 | 3  |
| 1932-1934                                 | 3 | 4  |
| 1935 (1/2)                                | 3 | 5  |
| 1935 (2/2)                                | 3 | 6  |
| 1936 and n.d.                             | 3 | 7  |
| Financials                                | 3 | 8  |
| Monthly Time Book                         | 3 | 9  |
| Receipts, 1908-1911                       | 3 | 10 |
| School Materials                          | 3 | 11 |
| Writings                                  | 3 | 12 |
| Y.M.C.A. Examiner                         | 3 | 13 |
| Marcus Cyrus Hunter, 1902-1926            |   |    |
| Correspondence, 1902-1904, 1922           | 4 | 1  |
| Receipts, 1922-1926                       | 4 | 2  |

|  |    |    |
|--|----|----|
| Moffatt Ira Hunter, 1906-1910              |    |    |
| Correspondence, 1908-1910                  | 4  | 3  |
| Financials, 1906-1908                      | 4  | 4  |
| Receipts, 1907-1908                        | 4  | 5  |
| School Materials                           | 4  | 6  |
| Olin W. Hunter, n.d.                       |    |    |
| Obituaries and Memorials                   | 4  | 7  |
| Rebecca Wilson Jones Hunter, 1864-1881     |    |    |
| Correspondence, 1864-1881 and n.d.         | 4  | 8  |
| Robert Boston Hunter, 1848-1904            |    |    |
| Correspondence, 1898                       | 4  | 9  |
| Court Orders, Road Repair, 1851            | 4  | 10 |
| Deeds                                      | 4  | 11 |
| Estate, 1904                               | 4  | 12 |
| Indenture, 1860                            | 4  | 13 |
| Indenture, n.d.                            | 39 |    |
| Land Map, 1901                             | 4  | 14 |
| Leave Slips, 1859 and 1864                 | 4  | 15 |
| Receipts                                   |    |    |
| 1850-1858                                  | 4  | 16 |
| 1863-1868 and n.d.                         | 4  | 17 |
| Receipts, Tax, 1848, 1863, and 1871        | 4  | 18 |
| Robert Leroy Hunter, 1901-1905             |    |    |
| Correspondence, 1904                       | 4  | 19 |
| Estate Papers, 1904-1905                   | 4  | 20 |
| Receipts, 1901 and 1904                    | 4  | 21 |
| William May Hunter, 1870-1903              |    |    |
| Correspondence, 1870-1881, 1903, and n.d.  | 4  | 22 |
| <b>MacAulay Family, 1980s</b>              |    |    |
| Reunions, 1981 and 1985                    | 4  | 23 |
| <b>Ranson Family, 1883-1990</b>            |    |    |
| General, Financial, 1931                   | 4  | 24 |
| General, Funeral Assistance Record, n.d.   | 4  | 25 |
| General, Genealogies (1/2)                 | 4  | 26 |
| General, Genealogies (2/2)                 | 4  | 27 |
| General, House Guest Register, 1972        | 4  | 28 |
| General, Receipts, 1920-1927               | 4  | 29 |
| General, Sports                            | 4  | 30 |
| General, Unidentified Correspondence, 1928 | 4  | 31 |
| Ranson House Financial                     | 4  | 32 |
| Catherine Carpenter Ranson, n.d.           |    |    |
| Obituaries and Memorials                   | 5  | 1  |
| Dallas Jackson Ranson, 1927-1938           |    |    |
| Addresses                                  | 5  | 2  |
| Correspondence, 1927-1938 and n.d.         | 5  | 3  |
| Financials                                 | 5  | 4  |



|  |   |    |
|--|---|----|
| Obituaries and Memorials                     | 5 | 5  |
| Receipts, 1929-1933                          | 5 | 6  |
| School Work                                  | 5 | 7  |
| Donald Ranson, 1927-1980                     |   |    |
| Correspondence                               |   |    |
| 1927-1931                                    | 5 | 8  |
| 1943-1944, 1980, and n.d.                    | 5 | 9  |
| Ellen Viola Hunter Ranson, 1884-1930         |   |    |
| Correspondence                               |   |    |
| 1884, 1916-1919                              | 5 | 10 |
| 1925-1930 and n.d.                           | 5 | 11 |
| War Mothers Pilgrimage, 1930                 | 5 | 12 |
| James Leroy Ranson, n.d.                     |   |    |
| Clubs and Organizations                      | 5 | 13 |
| John James Ranson, 1885                      |   |    |
| Deeds, 1885                                  | 5 | 14 |
| John Oliver Ranson, 1914-1920                |   |    |
| Correspondence, 1918                         | 5 | 15 |
| Financials, 1914                             | 5 | 16 |
| Newspaper Articles                           | 5 | 17 |
| Obituaries and Memorials                     | 5 | 18 |
| Receipts, 1920                               | 5 | 19 |
| Kate Ranson Cornue, 1925-1987                |   |    |
| Articles                                     | 5 | 20 |
| Auction Sales Sheets, 1949                   | 5 | 21 |
| Birthday Celebrations                        | 5 | 22 |
| Certificates                                 | 5 | 23 |
| Clubs and Organizations                      | 5 | 24 |
| Commencement, Huntersville High School, 1925 | 5 | 25 |
| Correspondence                               |   |    |
| 1929-1939                                    | 5 | 26 |
| 1943-1949                                    | 5 | 27 |
| 1951-1952                                    | 6 | 1  |
| 1953   | 6 | 2  |
| 1954   | 6 | 3  |
| 1955   | 6 | 4  |
| 1956-1957                                    | 6 | 5  |
| 1960-1964                                    | 6 | 6  |
| 1965-1969                                    | 6 | 7  |
| 1970-1973                                    | 7 | 1  |
| 1975-1979                                    | 7 | 2  |
| 1981-1987                                    | 7 | 3  |
| n.d.   | 7 | 4  |
| Expenses, 1964                               | 7 | 5  |
| Motor Vehicle Registration, 1981             | 7 | 6  |
| Obituaries and Memorials                     | 7 | 7  |

|                                  |    |       |
|----------------------------------|----|-------|
| Personnel                        | 7  | 8     |
| Programs, 1928                   | 7  | 9     |
| Receipts, 1951-1981              | 7  | 10    |
| School Materials                 | 7  | 11    |
| School Schedules                 | 7  | 12    |
| Tax Paperwork, 1951-1952         | 7  | 13    |
| Writings (2 folders)             | 7  | 14-15 |
| Writings (5 folders)             | 8  | 1-5   |
| Frederick Cornue, 1951-1962      |    |       |
| Correspondence, 1951-1962        | 9  | 1     |
| Virginia Cornue, 1950s-1968      |    |       |
| Correspondence, 1950s            | 9  | 2     |
| Wedding Invitation, 1968         | 9  | 3     |
| Lucius Hunter Ranson, 1913-1954  |    |       |
| Application for Commission, 1917 | 9  | 4     |
| Articles                         | 9  | 5     |
| Certificates                     | 9  | 6     |
| Clubs and Organizations          | 9  | 7     |
| Correspondence                   |    |       |
| 1913 (1/2)                       | 9  | 8     |
| 1913 (2/2)                       | 9  | 9     |
| 1914 (1/3)                       | 9  | 10    |
| 1914 (2/3)                       | 9  | 11    |
| 1914 (3/3)                       | 9  | 12    |
| 1915                             | 10 | 1     |
| 1916                             | 10 | 2     |
| 1917 (1/2)                       | 10 | 3     |
| 1917 (2/2)                       | 10 | 4     |
| 1918 (1/2)                       | 10 | 5     |
| 1918 (2/2)                       | 10 | 6     |
| 1920-1923                        | 10 | 7     |
| 1923-1925                        | 11 | 1     |
| 1930-1931                        | 11 | 2     |
| 1932-1935                        | 11 | 3     |
| 1943-1954 and n.d.               | 11 | 4     |
| Diary, n.d.                      | 11 | 5     |
| Financials, 1915-1932 (1/2)      | 11 | 6     |
| Financials, 1915-1932 (2/2)      | 11 | 7     |
| Identification Cards             | 11 | 8     |
| Leave Slips, 1917                | 11 | 9     |
| Personnel                        | 11 | 10    |
| Prayer Book                      | 12 | 1     |
| Programs, 1914 and n.d.          | 12 | 2     |
| Receipts, 1916-1935 and n.d.     | 12 | 3     |
| School Work                      | 12 | 4     |
| Tax, Income, 1920-1933           | 12 | 5     |

|                                     |    |    |
|-------------------------------------|----|----|
| Teacher's Report, 1915              | 12 | 6  |
| Wills, 1925                         | 12 | 7  |
| Mary Ellen Ranson, n.d.             |    |    |
| Obituaries and Memorials            | 12 | 8  |
| Mary McCreary Ranson, n.d.          |    |    |
| Obituaries and Memorials            | 12 | 9  |
| Murphy Dale Ranson, 1920-1930, 1990 |    |    |
| Announcements and Invitations       | 12 | 10 |
| Biographies, 1990                   | 12 | 11 |
| Business Cards                      | 12 | 12 |
| Clubs and Organizations             | 12 | 13 |
| Correspondence                      |    |    |
| 1921-1924                           | 12 | 14 |
| 1925-1927                           | 12 | 15 |
| 1930 and n.d.                       | 12 | 16 |
| Financials                          | 12 | 17 |
| Obituaries and Memorials            | 12 | 18 |
| Paystubs, 1920                      | 12 | 19 |
| Receipts, 1920-1926 and n.d.        | 13 | 1  |
| School Work                         | 13 | 2  |
| Writings                            | 13 | 3  |
| Nelle Ranson, 1923-1987             |    |    |
| Articles                            | 13 | 4  |
| Bill of Sale, 1957                  | 13 | 5  |
| Certificates                        | 39 |    |
| Clubs and Organizations             | 13 | 6  |
| Correspondence                      |    |    |
| 1923-1926                           | 13 | 7  |
| 1934-1939                           | 13 | 8  |
| 1940-1943                           | 13 | 9  |
| 1944                                | 13 | 10 |
| 1945                                | 13 | 11 |
| 1946                                | 13 | 12 |
| 1947                                | 13 | 13 |
| 1948-1949                           | 14 | 1  |
| 1950-1953                           | 14 | 2  |
| 1954-1959                           | 14 | 3  |
| 1960-1969                           | 14 | 4  |
| 1970-1974                           | 14 | 5  |
| 1975-1979                           | 14 | 6  |
| 1980-1984                           | 15 | 1  |
| 1985-1987                           | 15 | 2  |
| Expenses, 1960                      | 15 | 3  |
| Financials                          | 15 | 4  |
| Personnel                           | 15 | 5  |
| Ration Cards                        | 15 | 6  |

|                               |    |    |
|-------------------------------|----|----|
| Receipts, 1939-1955           | 15 | 7  |
| Retirement                    | 39 |    |
| Settlement Papers, 1955       | 15 | 8  |
| Tax, Income, 1960             | 15 | 9  |
| Writings                      | 15 | 10 |
| Paul Jones Ranson, 1917-1946  |    |    |
| Business Cards                | 15 | 11 |
| Clubs and Organizations       | 15 | 12 |
| Correspondence                |    |    |
| 1917-1919                     | 15 | 13 |
| 1920-1921                     | 15 | 14 |
| 1922-1924                     | 16 | 1  |
| 1925-1927                     | 16 | 2  |
| 1931-1934                     | 16 | 3  |
| 1943-1946 and n.d.            | 16 | 4  |
| Dance Card, 1922              | 16 | 5  |
| Discharge Papers, 1919        | 16 | 6  |
| Financials                    | 16 | 7  |
| Obituaries and Memorials      | 16 | 8  |
| Policies                      | 16 | 9  |
| Receipts, 1917-1937 and n.d.  | 16 | 10 |
| School Work                   | 16 | 11 |
| Soldier's Information         | 16 | 12 |
| Rebecca Ranson, n.d.          |    |    |
| Theatre                       | 16 | 13 |
| Richard C. Ranson, n.d.       |    |    |
| Articles                      | 16 | 14 |
| Robert Lacy Ranson, 1903-1965 |    |    |
| Business Cards                | 17 | 1  |
| Certificates                  | 17 | 2  |
| Clubs and Organizations       | 17 | 3  |
| Correspondence                |    |    |
| 1918                          | 17 | 4  |
| 1920-1921                     | 17 | 5  |
| 1922                          | 17 | 6  |
| 1923 (1/2)                    | 17 | 7  |
| 1923 (2/2)                    | 17 | 8  |
| 1924                          | 17 | 9  |
| 1926-1929                     | 17 | 10 |
| 1930-1931                     | 18 | 1  |
| 1932-1935                     | 18 | 2  |
| 1948-1959                     | 18 | 3  |
| 1961-1962 and n.d.            | 18 | 4  |
| Course Registration, 1924     | 18 | 5  |
| Deeds, 1955                   | 18 | 6  |
| Discharge Papers, 1919        | 18 | 7  |

|  |    |    |
|--|----|----|
| Financials   | 18 | 8  |
| Licenses   | 18 | 9  |
| Newspaper Articles                                 | 18 | 10 |
| Obituaries and Memorials                           | 18 | 11 |
| Ruth Robinson                                      | 18 | 12 |
| Personnel  | 18 | 13 |
| Receipts   |    |    |
| 1903-1932 and n.d.                                 | 18 | 14 |
| School, 1920                                       | 18 | 15 |
| School Work  | 18 | 16 |
| Speeches   | 18 | 17 |
| Track Number                                       | 18 | 18 |
| Wills, 1961 and 1965                               | 18 | 19 |
| Writings   | 18 | 20 |
| Rose Hunter Ranson, n.d.                           |    |    |
| Obituaries and Memorials                           | 18 | 21 |
| William Earl Ranson, 1921                          |    |    |
| Correspondence, 1921                               | 18 | 22 |
| William Joseph Ranson, 1883-1932                   |    |    |
| Correspondence                                     |    |    |
| 1888-1890  | 18 | 23 |
| 1917-1918  | 18 | 24 |
| 1921-1926  | 18 | 25 |
| 1931-1932 and n.d.                                 | 18 | 26 |
| Land Maps, 1903 and 1926                           | 18 | 27 |
| Receipts, 1890, 1918, and 1921                     | 18 | 28 |
| Receipts, Tax, 1883-1899                           | 18 | 29 |
| <b>Sample Family, n.d.</b>                         |    |    |
| Genealogies and Family Notes                       | 18 | 30 |
| <b>General Records, 1878-1989</b>                  |    |    |
| Account Books                                      |    |    |
| Personal, Unidentified, 1920s                      | 19 | 1  |
| Dairy, 1929  | 19 | 2  |
| Address Book, Unidentified, n.d.                   | 19 | 3  |
| Address Lists, n.d.                                | 19 | 4  |
| Advertisements and Brochures, 1913-1971            |    |    |
| Camps, 1915-1924                                   | 19 | 5  |
| Charlotte and Mecklenburg County Businesses        | 19 | 6  |
| Conferences and Lectures, 1913-1934 and 1971       | 19 | 7  |
| Non-Local Businesses                               | 19 | 8  |
| Announcements and Invitations, 1897-1987           | 19 | 9  |
| Architectural Description, R.M. Sample House, 1979 | 19 | 10 |
| Business Cards, n.d.                               | 19 | 11 |
| <i>Charlotte News</i> , n.d.                       |    |    |
| Advertising Sheets, Blank, n.d.                    | 19 | 12 |
| News Rush Envelopes, n.d.                          | 19 | 13 |

|  |    |    |
|--|----|----|
| Churches, 1878-1889  |    |    |
| Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and Gilead,<br>Parsonage Tax Receipts, 1934 | 19 | 14 |
| Associate Reformed Presbyterian Churches   |    |    |
| Due West   |    |    |
| Newsletters  |    |    |
| <i>Associate Reform Presbyterian</i>   |    |    |
| 1878   | 19 | 15 |
| 1914   | 19 | 16 |
| 1915   | 19 | 17 |
| 1917   | 19 | 18 |
| 1970   | 19 | 19 |
| General  |    |    |
| Newsletters  |    |    |
| <i>Presbyterian Standard</i> , 1914  | 19 | 20 |
| Publications   |    |    |
| <i>A Short Catechism for Young Children</i> , n.d.                                 | 19 | 21 |
| First Presbyterian, Charlotte  |    |    |
| Meeting Minutes, 1908  | 20 | 1  |
| Young People's Christian Union Topics, 1910  | 20 | 2  |
| Glenwood, Charlotte  |    |    |
| Women's Synodical Union Meeting Program, 1977                                      | 20 | 3  |
| Huntersville   |    |    |
| Building Dedication, 1950  | 20 | 4  |
| Bulletins, 1969-1978 and 1989  | 20 | 5  |
| Centennial Celebration, 1975   | 20 | 6  |
| Church Directories, 1981, 1985, and 1987   | 20 | 7  |
| Elder's Ledger, 1893-1897  | 20 | 8  |
| Histories  | 20 | 9  |
| Infant Baptism Record, 1902  | 20 | 10 |
| Newsletters  |    |    |
| <i>The Gilead News</i> , 1984  | 20 | 11 |
| <i>The Huntersville and Gilead Church Member</i> , 1913                            | 20 | 12 |
| Scrapbook  | 20 | 13 |
| Speakers   | 20 | 14 |
| Treasurer's Report, 1920   | 20 | 15 |
| Vacation Bible School Teacher's Certificate  | 20 | 16 |
| Women's Society  |    |    |
| Convention Program, 1924   | 20 | 17 |
| Directories, 1971, 1982, 1986, and 1991  | 20 | 18 |
| Financials, 1918   | 20 | 19 |
| Histories  | 20 | 20 |
| Meeting Minutes  |    |    |
| 1880-1895  | 20 | 21 |
| 1897-1906  | 20 | 22 |
| Idlewild   |    |    |

|  |    |    |
|--|----|----|
| Newsletters, 1973                            | 20 | 23 |
| Old Brick Church                             |    |    |
| Historical Celebration Program, 1973         | 20 | 24 |
| Maupin Avenue, Salisbury                     |    |    |
| Bulletins, 1965                              | 20 | 25 |
| Church Directories, 1974                     | 20 | 26 |
| Sermon, 1950                                 | 20 | 27 |
| Women's Society, Yearbook, 1967-1968         | 20 | 28 |
| Shiloh                                       |    |    |
| Jubilee Celebration Program, n.d.            | 21 | 1  |
| Baptist Churches                             |    |    |
| First Baptist, Huntersville                  |    |    |
| Newsletters, <i>Midweek Messenger</i> , 1989 | 21 | 2  |
| Lutheran Churches                            |    |    |
| Organ Lutheran, Rowan County,                |    |    |
| Memorial Dedication Program, 1976            | 21 | 3  |
| Presbyterian Churches                        |    |    |
| Brevard-Davidson River                       |    |    |
| History                                      | 21 | 4  |
| Hopewell Presbyterian, Huntersville          |    |    |
| History                                      | 21 | 5  |
| United Methodist Churches                    |    |    |
| Huntersville                                 |    |    |
| Newsletters, <i>News and Views</i> , 1984    | 21 | 6  |
| Prayers Lists and Obituaries                 | 21 | 7  |
| Sunday School Class List, Unidentified       | 21 | 8  |
| Cities and Towns, 1877-1971                  |    |    |
| Huntersville                                 |    |    |
| Commissioners' Meeting Minutes, 1971         | 21 | 9  |
| Histories                                    | 21 | 10 |
| Mayors, 1877-1961                            | 21 | 11 |
| Clubs and Organizations, 1901-1987           |    |    |
| Altrusa                                      |    |    |
| Workshop Minutes, 1956                       | 21 | 12 |
| Yearbooks                                    |    |    |
| 1949-1952                                    | 21 | 13 |
| 1953-1955                                    | 21 | 14 |
| American Legion                              |    |    |
| Beauty Pageant Flyer, 1933                   | 21 | 15 |
| Garden Club of Myers Park                    |    |    |
| Brochure, 1916                               | 21 | 16 |
| Huntersville Lions Club                      |    |    |
| Beauty Contest and Talent Show Flyer, n.d.   | 21 | 17 |
| Huntersville Woman's Club                    |    |    |
| Program, 1987                                | 21 | 18 |
| Newsletters, 1980                            | 21 | 19 |

|  |    |    |
|--|----|----|
| Yearbooks, 1973-1974 and 1980-1981                             | 21 | 20 |
| Mecklenburg Historical Association                             |    |    |
| Brochures  | 21 | 21 |
| Correspondence, 1980-1986                                      | 21 | 22 |
| Roster, 1980   | 21 | 23 |
| North Carolina Young People's Christian Union                  |    |    |
| Quarterly Report, 1918   | 21 | 24 |
| Philomathean Literary Society                                  |    |    |
| Due West   |    |    |
| Constitution and By-Laws, 1901                                 | 21 | 25 |
| Ohio   |    |    |
| Constitution and By-Laws, 1901                                 | 21 | 26 |
| Y.M.C.A.   |    |    |
| Handbook, 1909   | 21 | 27 |
| Colleges and Universities, 1905-1989                           |    |    |
| Davidson College   |    |    |
| Songs and Commencement Invitation, 1927                        | 21 | 28 |
| East Carolina University                                       |    |    |
| Commencement Invitation, 1949                                  | 21 | 29 |
| Erskine College  |    |    |
| Catalog, 1935  | 21 | 30 |
| Commencement Programs, 1961 and 1965                           | 21 | 31 |
| Event Programs, 1971 and 1989                                  | 21 | 32 |
| Flora Macdonald College  |    |    |
| Event Programs, 1931-1932                                      | 21 | 33 |
| Mecklenburg College  |    |    |
| Building Dedication, 1962                                      | 21 | 34 |
| North Carolina College for Women                               |    |    |
| Commencement Invitation, 1921                                  | 22 | 1  |
| North Carolina Colleges Tuition, n.d.                          | 22 | 2  |
| Ohio University  |    |    |
| Student Course Contact Cards, 1934                             | 22 | 3  |
| Presbyterian School of Christian Education                     |    |    |
| President Orr Inauguration, 1975                               | 22 | 4  |
| Unidentified Class Roll, n.d.                                  | 22 | 5  |
| University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill                       |    |    |
| Class List, 1914   | 22 | 6  |
| Commencement Programs, 1922 and 1925                           | 22 | 7  |
| Directories, 1914-1916   | 22 | 8  |
| Event Programs, 1905-1932 and 1970                             | 22 | 9  |
| Newsletters  |    |    |
| <i>The Alumni Review</i> , October 1918                        | 22 | 10 |
| <i>The Tar Heel</i> , December 1914                            | 22 | 11 |
| <i>The University of North Carolina Newsletter</i> , June 1920 | 22 | 12 |
| Reunions, 1926, 1974, and 1979                                 | 22 | 13 |
| Westminster College  |    |    |



|  |    |    |
|--|----|----|
| Commencement Program, 1975                                     | 22 | 14 |
| Whitsett Institute   |    |    |
| Commencement Invitation, 1913                                  | 22 | 15 |
| Woman's College, Due West, South Carolina                      |    |    |
| Program, 1917  | 22 | 16 |
| Correspondence, n.d.   |    |    |
| General, Identified  | 22 | 17 |
| General, Unidentified  | 22 | 18 |
| Drawings, n.d.   |    |    |
| Unidentified   | 22 | 19 |
| Ephemera, 1925 and n.d.  |    |    |
| Citizens' Military Training Camp Medal, 1925                   | 22 | 20 |
| HMS Button   | 22 | 21 |
| Lunch Room Receipts Envelope                                   | 22 | 22 |
| Meadow Brook Silk Ends   | 22 | 23 |
| Neil Drug Company, Inc. Bag                                    | 22 | 24 |
| North Carolina Button  | 22 | 25 |
| Photograph Sleeves, R.W. Foister                               | 22 | 26 |
| Southern Conference Championship Game Memorabilia, 1926        | 22 | 27 |
| Ticket Stubs   | 22 | 28 |
| Travel, n.d.   | 22 | 29 |
| Financials, n.d.   |    |    |
| Unidentified (1/2)   | 22 | 30 |
| Unidentified (2/2)   | 23 | 1  |
| Forms, 1916  |    |    |
| North Carolina Department of Agriculture, Sample Forms, 1916   | 23 | 2  |
| Judgment Records, 1939   |    |    |
| Unidentified, 1939   | 23 | 3  |
| Maps, n.d.   |    |    |
| Unidentified   | 23 | 4  |
| Mecklenburg County, 1920-1962                                  |    |    |
| Board of Education   |    |    |
| Correspondence, 1956   | 23 | 5  |
| Meeting Minutes, May 1961 and September 1962                   | 23 | 6  |
| Budget Appropriations Resolution, 1961                         | 23 | 7  |
| Mecklenburg County Council Program, 1919                       | 23 | 8  |
| Mecklenburg County Sanatorium Report, 1930                     | 23 | 9  |
| Superintendent of Public Welfare Annual Reports, 1920 and 1921 | 23 | 10 |
| Memo Pads, Unidentified  | 23 | 11 |
| Newsclippings, 1920, 2005, and n.d.                            |    |    |
| Bank of Huntersville   | 23 | 12 |
| Charlotte and Mecklenburg County People                        | 23 | 13 |
| Gold Star Mothers  | 23 | 14 |
| Mecklenburg County   | 23 | 15 |
| Mecklenburg County Field Day, 1920                             | 23 | 16 |

|   |    |    |
|---|----|----|
| Ranson-Hunter Collection Donation, 2005                             | 23 | 17 |
| Ranson Store  | 23 | 18 |
| World War I Letter to the Editor                                    | 23 | 19 |
| Newsletters, 1933 and 1980  |    |    |
| Huntersville Community Development Association, <i>Light</i> , 1980 | 23 | 20 |
| <i>New York Life Insurance Company Review</i> , August 1933         | 23 | 21 |
| Newspapers, 1920s and 1970s   |    |    |
| <i>Charlotte Observer</i>   |    |    |
| Exposition Edition  |    |    |
| September 23, 1921  | 23 | 22 |
| September 26, 1921  | 23 | 23 |
| <i>Mecklenburg Gazette</i>  |    |    |
| December 1979   | 23 | 24 |
| <i>North Mecklenburg News</i>                                       |    |    |
| October 1926  | 23 | 25 |
| November 1926   | 23 | 26 |
| <i>The Tar Heel</i>   |    |    |
| May 1922  | 23 | 27 |
| <i>Weekly Star</i>  |    |    |
| June 1977   | 23 | 28 |
| Obituaries and Memorials, General                                   | 23 | 29 |
| Paintings, Unidentified   | 23 | 30 |
| Poems, Unidentified   | 23 | 31 |
| Politics, 1952, 1978, and n.d.                                      |    |    |
| Campaign Materials  | 23 | 32 |
| Huntersville Mayor and Alderman Ballot, n.d.                        | 23 | 33 |
| Democratic Primary Sample Ballot, 1952                              | 23 | 34 |
| Mecklenburg County Voter Guide, 1978                                | 23 | 35 |
| Postcards, blank  | 24 | 1  |
| Programs, General, 1923-1944 and n.d.                               | 24 | 2  |
| Publications, 1885-1979   |    |    |
| <i>The Charlotte Collegian</i> , February 1963                      | 24 | 3  |
| <i>Cotton Ginner's Record Book</i> , 1908                           | 24 | 4  |
| <i>Dr. MacDonald's Household Almanac</i> , 1917                     | 24 | 5  |
| <i>The Eye Line</i> , November 1968-April 1969                      | 24 | 6  |
| <i>Facing Student Problems</i> , n.d.                               | 24 | 7  |
| <i>Follett's Firehouse Menu</i> , 1976                              | 24 | 8  |
| <i>Fortune in Frogs</i> , 1933                                      | 24 | 9  |
| <i>Ginger and Pepper</i> , 1926                                     | 24 | 10 |
| <i>The Herald</i> , n.d.  | 39 |    |
| <i>Liaison: The Courier of the Big Gun Corps</i> , 1919             | 24 | 11 |
| "Longwood" As I Remember It, n.d.                                   | 24 | 12 |
| <i>Look to the One Beckoning Star</i> , 1979                        | 24 | 13 |
| <i>North Carolina Merit Examinations</i> , 1944                     | 24 | 14 |
| <i>Original Poems, Book One</i> , 1936                              | 24 | 15 |
| <i>Palmer's Piano Primer</i> , 1885                                 | 24 | 16 |

|  |    |    |
|--|----|----|
| <i>The Progressive Farmer</i> , n.d.   | 39 |    |
| <i>The Red Cross Magazine</i> , April 1918                                     | 24 | 17 |
| <i>Simonds Guide for Carpenters</i> , 1911                                     | 24 | 18 |
| <i>The Sunset Road</i> , 1962  | 24 | 19 |
| <i>The Old Torrence Mill</i> , n.d.  | 24 | 20 |
| <i>U.S. Department of Agriculture Farmers Bulletin</i> , February 1915         | 24 | 21 |
| <i>Y.M.C.A. Budget Book</i> , 1920   | 24 | 22 |
| Receipts, 1898-1934  |    |    |
| Mrs. J.M. Bighain, 1919  | 24 | 23 |
| J.L. Choate, 1898-1902   | 24 | 24 |
| Tax, 1894-1896   | 25 | 1  |
| Unidentified, 1901-1934  | 25 | 2  |
| Recipes, n.d.  | 25 | 3  |
| Rosters, 1918  |    |    |
| Company "F," 1918  | 25 | 4  |
| Schools, 1909-1975   |    |    |
| General  |    |    |
| Event Programs, 1915 and n.d.  | 25 | 5  |
| <i>Juvenile Courts in North Carolina, A Square Deal for the Child</i> , 1923   | 25 | 6  |
| North Carolina State Board of Health Physical Examination Record, Blank, 1920s | 25 | 7  |
| <i>The Parents Part</i> , 1919   | 25 | 8  |
| <i>The Problem of Sex Education in Schools</i> , 1919                          | 25 | 9  |
| Brevard Elementary School  |    |    |
| School Memory Book, 1954-1955  | 25 | 10 |
| Central Industrial Education Center  |    |    |
| Monthly Report, May 1961   | 25 | 11 |
| Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools  |    |    |
| Consolidation Information  | 25 | 12 |
| Correspondence, 1961   | 25 | 13 |
| Curricula, 1957-1958   | 25 | 14 |
| Directory, 1963-1964   | 25 | 15 |
| Draft Article, n.d.  | 25 | 16 |
| Policies, 1961   | 25 | 17 |
| Teachers' Handbook   |    |    |
| 1966-1967  | 25 | 18 |
| 1969-1970  | 25 | 19 |
| Cochrane Junior High   |    |    |
| Student Directory, 1966-1967   | 25 | 20 |
| Crossnore High School  |    |    |
| Commencement Programs, 1952-1954 and 1968                                      | 25 | 21 |
| Newsletters, 1980s   | 25 | 22 |
| Yearbooks, 1954  | 25 | 23 |
| Fayetteville High School   |    |    |

|   |    |    |
|---|----|----|
| Yearbooks, 1927                                   | 25 | 24 |
| Harry P. Harding High School                      |    |    |
| Dedication Brochure, 1962                         | 25 | 25 |
| Horner Military School                            |    |    |
| Brochures, c. 1916                                | 26 | 1  |
| Catalog, 1915-1916                                | 26 | 2  |
| Commencement Program, 1915                        | 26 | 3  |
| Huntersville High School                          |    |    |
| Articles  | 26 | 4  |
| Commencement Programs, 1909, 1916, 1923, and 1951 | 26 | 5  |
| Correspondence, 1915-1917                         | 26 | 6  |
| Event Programs, 1915 and 1917                     | 26 | 7  |
| Newsletters, <i>Highlights</i> , December 1924    | 26 | 8  |
| Independence School                               |    |    |
| Brochures, n.d.                                   | 26 | 9  |
| Irwin Avenue Junior High                          |    |    |
| Newsletters, 1968                                 | 26 | 10 |
| John Taylor Williams Junior High                  |    |    |
| Event Programs, 1969-1971                         | 26 | 11 |
| Yearbooks, 1971                                   | 26 | 12 |
| Lee School for Boys                               |    |    |
| Brochures, 1926                                   | 26 | 13 |
| Mecklenburg County Schools                        |    |    |
| Administration Reorganization Plan, 1957          | 26 | 14 |
| Administrative Council Minutes, March 1961        | 26 | 15 |
| Bulletins, March and May 1961                     | 26 | 16 |
| Event Programs, n.d.                              | 26 | 17 |
| Parent Teacher Associations Directory, 1957-1958  | 26 | 18 |
| Report of Academically Talented, 1961             | 26 | 19 |
| School Report, 1960-1961                          | 26 | 20 |
| North Mecklenburg High School                     |    |    |
| Commencement Programs, 1952, 1960, 1972, and 1975 | 26 | 21 |
| Event Programs, n.d.                              | 26 | 22 |
| Key Club Student Directory, 1960                  | 26 | 23 |
| Newsletters, 1960-1961                            | 26 | 24 |
| Student Grade Sheets, 1953-1954                   | 26 | 25 |
| Northwest Junior High School                      |    |    |
| Class Roll, 1970-1971                             | 26 | 26 |
| Event Programs, 1968                              | 26 | 27 |
| Teachers' Handbook, 1968                          | 26 | 28 |
| Orange Grove                                      |    |    |
| Commencement Program, 1912                        | 26 | 29 |
| Pineville High School                             |    |    |
| Commencement Programs, 1922                       | 26 | 30 |
| Robert Lacy Ranson Junior High School             |    |    |
| Certificates, n.d.                                | 26 | 31 |

|                                    |    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|----|
| Event Programs, 1965-1966          | 26 | 32 |
| Newsletters, 1965                  | 26 | 33 |
| Yearbooks, 1965                    | 26 | 34 |
| Snow Hill High School              |    |    |
| Commencement Programs, 1939        | 26 | 35 |
| Event Programs, 1919 and 1939      | 26 | 36 |
| Student Report, n.d.               | 26 | 37 |
| Thomasboro                         |    |    |
| Fee Schedule, 1960-1961            | 26 | 38 |
| Torrence Lytle High School         |    |    |
| History, n.d.                      | 26 | 39 |
| Scrapbooks                         |    |    |
| Anna Brackett, 1970                | 27 | 1  |
| Sports                             |    |    |
| Schedules and Scores, 1920         | 27 | 2  |
| Stationery, Blank                  | 27 | 3  |
| Theatre, 1953-1980s                |    |    |
| Articles                           | 27 | 4  |
| Brevard Little Theatre             |    |    |
| Programs, 1955                     | 27 | 5  |
| Carolina Dramatic Association      |    |    |
| Festival Programs                  |    |    |
| 1953-1971 (1/2)                    | 27 | 6  |
| 1953-1971 (2/2)                    | 27 | 7  |
| Carolina Theatre                   |    |    |
| Programs, n.d.                     | 27 | 8  |
| Catawba College                    |    |    |
| Programs, n.d.                     | 27 | 9  |
| Central Piedmont Community College |    |    |
| Programs, 1980s                    | 27 | 10 |
| Charlotte Music Theatre            |    |    |
| Programs, 1960s                    | 27 | 11 |
| The Charlotte Opera Association    |    |    |
| Programs, 1975-1976                | 27 | 12 |
| Children's Theatre of Charlotte    |    |    |
| Programs and Information           | 27 | 13 |
| Davidson College                   |    |    |
| Programs, 1962-1966                | 27 | 14 |
| General                            |    |    |
| Schools                            | 27 | 15 |
| The Little Theatre                 |    |    |
| Programs, 1959 and n.d.            | 28 | 1  |
| The Mint Museum Drama Guild        |    |    |
| Programs, 1965-1975                | 28 | 2  |
| Non-Charlotte Theatres             |    |    |
| Programs, various                  | 28 | 3  |

|  |    |    |
|--|----|----|
| Ovens Auditorium                                 |    |    |
| Programs, 1957-1970                              | 28 | 4  |
| The Piedmont Players Theatre                     |    |    |
| Programs, 1965-1966                              | 28 | 5  |
| Queens College                                   |    |    |
| Programs, n.d.                                   | 28 | 6  |
| University of North Carolina, Charlotte (UNCC)   |    |    |
| Programs, 1971                                   | 28 | 7  |
| Waxhaw Historical Festival and Drama Association |    |    |
| Programs, 1970                                   | 28 | 8  |
| War Risk Insurance Fact Book, 1920               | 28 | 9  |
| Writings   |    |    |
| <i>The New Order</i> , Grace E. Hood, n.d.       | 28 | 10 |
| <i>This I Believe</i> , Inez Bolin Wall, 1956    | 28 | 11 |
| Unidentified                                     | 28 | 12 |
| <b>PHOTOGRAPHS</b>                               |    |    |
| <b>Family Photos</b>                             |    |    |
| Alexander Family                                 |    |    |
| Alexander Family                                 | 28 | 13 |
| Annie Alexander                                  | 28 | 14 |
| Beaty Family                                     | 28 | 15 |
| Orr Family                                       | 28 | 16 |
| Hunter Family                                    |    |    |
| Hunter Family?                                   | 28 | 17 |
| Andrew Jones and Harriet Sample Hunter?          | 28 | 18 |
| Dallas Wilson Hunter                             | 28 | 19 |
| Ernest Hunter                                    | 28 | 20 |
| Fred Hunter?                                     | 28 | 21 |
| Joseph Adams Hunter's Photos                     | 28 | 22 |
| Louis Jones Hunter                               | 28 | 23 |
| Dr. Marcus Hunter Family                         | 28 | 24 |
| Moffatt Ira Hunter                               | 28 | 25 |
| Rebecca Wilson Jones Hunter                      | 28 | 26 |
| Robert Boston Hunter                             | 28 | 27 |
| Roy L. Hunter                                    | 28 | 28 |
| Rev. W.W. Hunter Family                          | 28 | 29 |
| Ranson Family                                    |    |    |
| Ranson Family                                    | 29 | 1  |
| Ranson Family Home                               | 29 | 2  |
| Ranson Family Pets                               | 29 | 3  |
| Ranson Family Reunions                           | 29 | 4  |
| Ranson Family Store                              | 29 | 5  |
| Rev. Arthur Jones Ranson                         | 29 | 6  |
| Dallas Jackson Ranson?                           | 29 | 7  |
| Donald Hunter Ranson                             | 29 | 8  |
| Ellen Viola Hunter Ranson                        | 29 | 9  |

|   |    |    |
|---|----|----|
| Elizabeth Ann Ranson  | 29 | 10 |
| Frank and Ellen Ranson  | 29 | 11 |
| Kate Ranson Cornue (1/2)  | 29 | 12 |
| Kate Ranson Cornue (2/2)  | 29 | 13 |
| Kate and Nelle Ranson   | 29 | 14 |
| Kate and Nelle Ranson and the Quinzers                          | 29 | 15 |
| Kate Ranson's Students  | 29 | 16 |
| Frederick Cornue  | 29 | 17 |
| Virginia Cornue   | 29 | 18 |
| Cornue Family   | 29 | 19 |
| Lucius Henry Ranson (1/2)                                       | 29 | 20 |
| Lucius Henry Ranson (2/2)                                       | 29 | 21 |
| Lucius Hunter Ranson (1/2)                                      | 30 | 1  |
| Lucius Hunter Ranson (2/2)                                      | 30 | 2  |
| Mary Ellen Ranson   | 30 | 3  |
| Murphy Dale Ranson's Photos                                     | 30 | 4  |
| Nelle Ranson (1/2)  | 30 | 5  |
| Nelle Ranson (2/2)  | 30 | 6  |
| Oliver Ranson?  | 30 | 7  |
| Oliver Ranson, Jr.  | 30 | 8  |
| Paul Jones Ranson (1/2)   | 30 | 9  |
| Paul Jones Ranson (2/2)   | 30 | 10 |
| Paul Jones Ranson's Photos                                      | 30 | 11 |
| Robert Henry Ranson   | 30 | 12 |
| Robert Lacy Ranson  | 30 | 13 |
| Robert Lacy Ranson's Photos                                     | 30 | 14 |
| Roy Ranson  | 30 | 15 |
| William Joseph Ranson   | 30 | 16 |
| Ranson Family Friends and Family                                |    |    |
| Carrillo Family   | 31 | 1  |
| Dana Cross' Photos  | 31 | 2  |
| Blanche Godwin  | 31 | 3  |
| Dora Moose  | 31 | 4  |
| Joyce Nash? Wedding   | 31 | 5  |
| Stout? Gordon   | 31 | 6  |
| Identified Places   | 31 | 7  |
| Unidentified Scrapbook Photos                                   | 31 | 8  |
| <b>General Photos</b>   |    |    |
| Buildings   |    |    |
| Huntersville Bank   | 31 | 9  |
| Huntersville Hotel, c. 1912                                     | 31 | 10 |
| Huntersville Train Depot  | 31 | 11 |
| Old Academy, 1926   | 31 | 12 |
| Churches  |    |    |
| Huntersville Associate Reformed Presbyterian<br>Church Building | 31 | 13 |

|   |    |      |
|---|----|------|
| Churchmen, c. 1875                        | 31 | 14   |
| Mortgage Burning                          | 31 | 15   |
| Huntersville Baptist                      |    |      |
| Church Building                           | 31 | 16   |
| Colleges and Universities                 |    |      |
| Erskine College                           |    |      |
| Clubs and Organizations                   | 31 | 17   |
| Reunions                                  | 31 | 18   |
| Tusculum College                          |    |      |
| Class Photos                              | 31 | 19   |
| University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill |    |      |
| Class Photos                              | 31 | 20   |
| Sports                                    | 31 | 21   |
| Virginia Military Institute               |    |      |
| Sports                                    | 31 | 22   |
| Huntersville                              |    |      |
| Parades                                   | 31 | 23   |
| Schools                                   |    |      |
| Fayetteville High School                  |    |      |
| Sports (Yellow Jackets), 1929             | 31 | 24   |
| Horner Military School                    |    |      |
| Buildings                                 | 31 | 25   |
| Sports                                    | 31 | 26   |
| Huntersville                              |    |      |
| Buildings                                 | 31 | 27   |
| Class Photos, c. 1900-1930 (1/2)          | 31 | 28   |
| Class Photos, c. 1900-1930 (2/2)          | 31 | 29   |
| Presbyterian Church School                |    |      |
| Class Photos                              | 31 | 30   |
| Other                                     |    |      |
| Identified                                |    |      |
| Groups                                    | 31 | 31   |
| Individuals (1/2)                         | 31 | 32   |
| Individuals (2/2)                         | 32 | 1    |
| Unidentified                              |    |      |
| Groups (6 folders)                        | 32 | 2-7  |
| Individuals (3 folders)                   | 32 | 8-10 |
| Individuals (4 folders)                   | 33 | 1-4  |
| Military Groups                           | 33 | 5    |
| Places (1/2)                              | 33 | 6    |
| Places (2/2)                              | 33 | 7    |
| School Photos                             | 33 | 8    |
| <b>NEGATIVES</b>                          |    |      |
| <b>Family Photos</b>                      |    |      |
| Ranson Family                             | 33 | 9    |
| Ranson Family Home                        | 33 | 10   |



|   |    |     |
|---|----|-----|
| Frederick Cornue?   | 33 | 11  |
| Virginia Cornue's Photos  | 33 | 12  |
| Donald Ranson   | 33 | 13  |
| Murphy Dale Ranson's Photos   | 33 | 14  |
| Paul Jones Ranson's Photos  | 34 | 1   |
| Robert Lacy Ranson's Photos   | 34 | 2   |
| William Joseph and Ellen Viola Hunter Ranson  | 34 | 3   |
| <b>General Photos</b>   |    |     |
| Kate Ranson's Student Production  | 34 | 4   |
| Identified Groups   | 34 | 5   |
| Unidentified Photos   | 34 | 6-8 |
| <b>SLIDES</b>   |    |     |
| <b>Family Photos</b>  |    |     |
| Ranson Family Christmas   | 34 | 9   |
| Ranson Family Funeral, Unidentified   | 34 | 10  |
| Ranson Family Home  | 34 | 11  |
| Kate Ranson Cornue  | 34 | 12  |
| <b>ARTIFACTS</b>  |    |     |
| Belts, Coat hood, Flower pin, Glasses (Nelle's?), Keys, LP<br>Record (Convention), Shirt collars, wood slat | 35 |     |
| <b>OVERSIZE</b>   |    |     |
| Photographs   | 39 |     |
| Ranson books, ledgers   | 37 |     |
| Scrapbooks  |    |     |
| Robert Lacy Ranson  | 36 |     |
| Ranson Junior High School Dramateurs  | 38 |     |