
North Carolina Books

Robert G. Anthony, Jr., Compiler

Carolyn Sakowski. *Touring the Western North Carolina Backroads*. Winston-Salem, N.C.: John F. Blair, 1990. 305 pp. \$14.95. ISBN 0-89587-077-0 (paper).

Ironically, the author's desire to promote an appreciation of the isolated beauty and the quaint communities that have survived highway development in western North Carolina will result in increased traffic by readers of her inspirational guide. Sakowski's great contribution to the bookshelf—if not the back seat of the car—is: 1) latching onto a rich concept; 2) applying an eye for delicious anecdote; and 3) delivering crisp prose. The problems with the book hardly tip the scales of an enthusiastic recommendation.

The tours require setting aside a whole day for each of twenty-one excursions, which range in length from twenty-one to 100 miles, many of which whiz by without authorial comment. The guide is best read first in an armchair, referring to simplified maps and noting opportunities to hike, picnic, play, and gape. Punctuated by explicit road directions, a fluid succession of stories play on important motifs: the mystery of nature as seen through Cherokee legends (drawn mostly from James Mooney); the exploitation of water, mineral, timber, and climate; and the horror and charm of pioneer ambition.

The better chapters have themes rather than lists of sites connected by roads. The tour of Haywood and Madison counties paints a picture of the old Buncombe Turnpike that lives up to the legend of "Bloody Madison," including century-old hearsay about a drover who tucked the bludgeoned body he found in his hotel room into his bed as a decoy to escape a murderous innkeeper. Sakowski makes effective use of quotations, adding to Madison's ambience with the WPA North Carolina guide's depiction of Marshall: "one mile long, one street wide, and sky high."

Sakowski ranges wide. In Marble, she recreates the cutter's experience; in Swain County, she reveals how Horace Kephart scientifically pinpointed his retreat to desolate wilderness; approaching Cullowhee, she stoops to reconstruct

the life of a man who made a fortune transplanting goat glands into men desirous of potency. She popularizes remote material. In Avery County, she explains the ardor of eighteenth-century botanists by comparing competition among nations for unusual flora to the space race today.

The biggest disappointment is that she does not provide insight into the lay of the land—which is what one mostly sees—and that she misses opportunities to dramatize current ecological concerns. There is no mention of the effect of acid rain on the Fraser firs on Mount Mitchell, which has, among other things, created an otherworldly scene.

The text refers to further reading, such as Jules Verne's novel set at Table Rock, but the bibliography is hastily assembled. The Trail of Tears story intensifies a few chapters, but the bibliography does not include John Ehle's work of that name. An opportunity to enlarge upon geography is missed by not including Harry Moore's *A Roadside Guide to the Geology of the Great Smoky Mountains*. William Bartram is quoted, but his *Travels* is not cited. The bibliography is not organized thematically to present a usable reading list. An index and a list of helpful agencies are just adequate. The book's format is attractive; a wide left-hand margin provides space for subheadings and photographs, but the photographs are horribly small and dark.

Sakowski does not prove herself to be a painstaking scholar in this effort; however, she is a reliable traveler, a homegrown appreciator, and a wonderful storyteller. The bottom line is, she has produced a unique resource that will be demanded and cherished by residents of and visitors to the region.

Rob Neufeld, Asheville-Buncombe Library System

Catherine W. Bishir, Charlotte V. Brown, Carl R. Lounsbury, and Ernest H. Wood III. *Architects and Builders in North Carolina: A History of the Practice of Building*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990. 540 pp. \$37.50. ISBN 0-8078-1898-4.

Histories of the practice of building, unlike histories of architecture, are relatively uncommon. Though related, there are important differences between the two genres. Histories of architecture tend to emphasize styles, significant buildings, and important architects. Histories of building practice are less concerned with what buildings look like, than with how they were built.

Perhaps the authors of *Architects and Builders in North Carolina* best summarize their book:

"This book is about the people who built North Carolina's architecture. It describes how the practice of building changed from traditional craft to complex industry. Although there have been many studies of segments of the history of American building practice, this is the first work to look at the builders as a whole—artisan and architect, contractor and manufacturer, slave and free, rural and urban—and to trace the history of building practice from early settlement to the present.... And, although it suggests the outlines of the larger national picture of building practice, this is a story rooted in a single place—North Carolina—and a story that emerges directly from the personal sagas of hundreds of individuals laboring at thousands of building sites across this long-rural state." (Introduction.)

With copious quotations from contemporary documents, the authors of this important book present a comprehensive account of how buildings of all types came to be built in North Carolina. The relationships between client and builder, the effect of technology and improvements in transportation on the availability and cost of building materials, the skills, pay, and working conditions of white and black artisans are covered chronologically from a beginning chapter on construction practices of the seventeenth century to the final chapter on builders and architectural firms of the 1980s.

The scholarly apparatus is impressive. Fifty-six pages of notes and a twenty-nine page bibliography reveal the large number of manuscript and printed sources consulted. Extensive research was conducted in manuscript collections at Duke University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the North Carolina Division of Archives and History.

Catherine W. Bishir, director of the North Carolina Architecture Project of the Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina, has written a number of articles on North Carolina topics. Her book, *North Carolina Architecture*, will be published in November 1990. Charlotte V. Brown directs the visual arts program at North Carolina State University. Carl Lounsbury, an architectural historian with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, wrote his dissertation on changes in the building process in North Carolina

in the nineteenth century. Ernest H. Wood writes on architectural subjects for *Southern Living*. Research assistance was provided by J. Marshall Bullock and William B. Bushong.

The book is well designed, with legible type, a conservative page layout, and sufficient margins for rebinding, should that become necessary. There are 155 illustrations, somewhat gray in reproduction but adequate for the purposes of this book.

Architects and Builders in North Carolina will be particularly valuable for architectural historians and for social and economic historians, both for specific facts and for its broad overview of building practice. General readers and students interested in architecture, the built environment, and North Carolina history will find it useful as well. It is strongly recommended for academic and public libraries.

Philip Rees, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Gloree Rogers. *Love, or a Reasonable Facsimile*. Durham: Carolina Wren Press, 1989. 160 pp. \$7.00. ISBN 0-932112-27-7 (paper).

Gloree Rogers's first novel is autobiographical, telling the story of a black girl growing up in North Carolina poor, handicapped, and trapped in damaging relationships.

The second of six children, Gloree is born in Bladen County with multiple birth defects, lacking pubic bone and vaginal opening, with her bladder out side her body, and with deformed legs. After numerous operations at Duke Hospital, the child learns to walk at age seven and is able to begin school, where the children make fun of her.

When Gloree is nine, her mother moves the family to Durham, where she lives with a succession of boy friends. Some of these men pity the little girl and are kind, but as she nears adolescence the men provoke her mother to beat her, and her life is constantly filled with violence. The neighborhood is no safer, as old Mr. Billy trades sacks of candy for sexual favors. "Ya ain't gonna tell nobody, is ya?"

After high school, Gloree moves to New York to work as a live-in maid. She becomes pregnant just months after having an operation to rebuild her vagina. Abandoned and jobless, she gives birth to a baby girl, then finds she has signed it over for adoption without realizing it. Recovering the baby, she moves back to Durham where she marries, divorces, has a series of painful relationships with abusive men, marries and divorces again, and continues the dismal cycle.

"I share the tragedies of my life in the hope that no living being will have to repeat these experiences except vicariously through the written word," writes Gloree Rogers. Yet the tragedies of cruelty, poverty, and ignorance are not ones that are easily escaped. Rogers's story rings true, and evokes in the reader strong emotions of outrage, pity, disgust, and hopelessness. The writing, however, is clumsy in places, with stiff dialogue, inconsistency of style, and a lack of character development. In spite of these flaws, the book received first place in the 1988 Carolina Wren-Obsidian II minority book contest for North Carolina.

This book is not about glorious achievements. It is about surviving, getting by, and settling, not for love, but a reasonable facsimile. It will be appropriate for academic collections in women's or black studies, and, in spite of the explicit sexual detail, for public libraries.

Lisa Dalton, Rockingham County Public Library

Chris Florance. *Up From Mount Misery: The Blossoming of North Carolina's Sandhills*. Ashboro, N.C.: Down Home Press, 1990. 211 pp. \$19.95. ISBN 0-9624255-3-2.

On the founding of Southern Pines, N.C., circa 1884, newspaperman and former clerk of the North Carolina House of Representatives John D. Cameron described the quality of the land of the Sandhills in these words:

There is no more barren or poverty-stricken belt in the state except Mount Misery near Wilmington, yet to this region Mr. Patrick has given the name of Southern Pines, a place where a pea vine will not grow and a grapevine cannot sprout. A sand bank where even the thinly scattered pine trees are stunted, where the wire grass stands in meager clumps, few and far between, and the white sand is marked with drifts of pine straw washed together by the summer floods that are not swallowed up by the thirsty desert.

This description was familiar to author Chris Florance, a former history teacher and ornamental horticulturist, who grew up in the area and graduated from Ellerbe High School in 1926. From personal knowledge as well as primary and secondary resources, Mrs. Florance tells the story of the arrival of a few wealthy and well-educated, mostly young, northerners in the early 1900s who saw both opportunity and potential in parts of an eight-county area called the Sandhills.

These visionary men bought and cleared land, built fine homes, planted crops, and started peach orchards. Because of their influence and minor

success in their ventures, friends were encouraged to come. Community schools were established for their poorer neighbors, a legacy that reached beyond the area and that was more successful than their agricultural pursuits. The dreams and struggles of these men, shared eventually by the native population, gradually saw the blossoming of an area thought to be forever doomed because of its poor soil.

The book is divided into four parts, three of which bear the names of Roger Alden Derby, Morris Randolph Mitchell, and Frederick Taylor Gates, men who in the 1920s came to live and work in the Sandhills. All three were from prominent families who as individuals had been friends to or were relatives of such persons as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Grover Cleveland, Teddy Roosevelt, Walter Hines Page, Raphael Pumpelly, Dr. James Albert Broadus, Richard Loverling, and John D. Rockefeller.

Drawing heavily upon the unpublished memoirs (1935) of Roger Alden Derby, Mrs. Florance creates an interesting and at times intimate account of these men and their families, their relationships with and contributions to the people of the area, and their successes and failures as entrepreneurs. Interwoven into this historical account of the "County Families," the term used to describe this colony of northerners, are various personal stories and reflections that could only be put in proper context by a writer who knows her subject. One such account is that of the small farm family, the fictional Chases, where one can experience the life of a poor but proud Sandhills family of the early 1900s.

The last part of the book, "Sandhills Memorabilia," includes poems by Roger Derby, Clyde L. Davis, and Raphael W. Pumpelly II, and letters from prominent persons such as Walter Hines Page and Ethel Roosevelt Derby. These writings all deal with the physical characteristics of the area itself or with life in the region.

Complementing the text are well-chosen pictures of persons and places discussed. The style of the author makes the book very readable, and public and academic libraries will want to add it to their collections. The paper board binding, however, will not survive many circulations. The book should have much appeal to lovers of the Sandhills and would make an excellent gift for resident or visitor. Mrs. Florance has also authored the award-winning book, *Carolina Home Gardener* (UNC Press, 1976), now out of print.

Gary Fenton Barefoot, Mount Olive College

Daniel W. Patterson and Charles G. Zug III, eds. *Arts in Earnest: North Carolina Folklife*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990. 319 pp. \$42.50. ISBN 0-8223-0943-2 (cloth), \$18.95. 0-8223-1021-X (paper).

"The exploration of folklore, then, is not an antiquarian pursuit; it leads directly into earnest intellectual, social, and human issues." (p. 3).

This quotation from the introduction to *Arts in Earnest* gives the reader a hint of what is to come. If, like this reader, you have considered folklife studies merely the documenting of quaint stories and customs from the past, you are in for a surprise when you read this book. Mischief on the factory floor, house design, tall tales told by fraternity boys, the chant of the tobacco auctioneer, and the aesthetics of duck decoys are now fit subjects for contemporary North Carolina folklorists. All these topics are included in this volume, as are more traditional subjects such as quilt-making, storytelling, religion, and music.

All fifteen essays in *Arts in Earnest* are based on both fieldwork and library research. In each essay, the author attempts to go beyond simply describing a story or a practice to an examination of the meaning of the activity for the performer and his or her community. Several of the essays, particularly those on music, show the authors' training in other subject fields. The essay by Thomas Carter and Thomas Sauber on the New River Valley String Band may be difficult for those who are unable to read music, but all of the other essays are very accessible. Laurel Horton's article on quilts in antebellum Rowan County is a model of clarity, and the essay by Stephen Matchak on wildfowl decoys succinctly covers the social and economic history of the northeastern North Carolina coast while discussing the decoy tradition of the area. John Forrest's article complements Matchak's by revealing the aesthetics of decoys and the relation of aesthetic achievement to status among duck hunters. The book includes essays on both black and white folk culture, and covers all geographic regions of North Carolina.

The authors of the fifteen essays are former students in the Curriculum in Folklore at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; the editors are faculty members in the program. The introduction by the editors provides an excellent review of the history of folklife studies. Most of the articles are illustrated, endnotes are included for all, and there is an index.

This is a scholarly book that can function as an introduction to modern folklife studies. It is also a readable volume that will be enjoyed by library patrons interested in North Caroliniana.

Recommended for academic libraries and larger public and high school libraries.

Eileen McGrath, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Reynolds Price. *The Tongues of Angels*. New York: Atheneum, 1990. 192 pp. \$17.95. ISBN 0-689-12093-1.

In his recent autobiographical work *Clear Pictures*, Reynolds Price describes the flood of early memories retrieved during and following hypnotherapy sessions which were part of his treatment for spinal cancer. In Price's eighth novel, *The Tongues of Angels*, the reader feels that the author is sharing the memories and feelings of his younger self more directly than in any of his previous fiction.

The novel's narrator and protagonist, Bridge Boatner, is the artist that Price realized at a young age that he would never be. Bridge has a great deal to say about his philosophy of painting in this novel, and many of his comments can be equally well applied to the art of the novelist. Still closer to home, Bridge like Price lost his father at age twenty-one, and was left to be "the man at bat" in his family. This is not a new theme in Price's work: Milo Mustian of *A Generous Man* found himself in the same position, as did Kate Vaiden. Here, however, Price creates a young man with talents similar to his own, sets him down in his own lifetime, and gives him the same summer job that he held himself one year in the early 1950s—counselor at a boys' camp in the North Carolina mountains. As Bridge moves through that summer consciously seeking to bury his father and the memories of his own helplessness in the face of his father's death pains, any reader with similar memories is likely to feel that Price has written more autobiography than fiction here. Beyond these parallels, Price writes in *Clear Pictures* that the events in Bridge's summer are completely fictional.

Bridge's duties at Camp Juniper included teaching art classes, writing and editing the camp newsletter, and tending a cabin full of lively ten to twelve-year-old boys. Two important things happened to him that summer: he completed his first significant painting, "The Smoky Mountains as the Meaning of Things," and he made a friend and lost one in fourteen-year-old Raphael Noren, a veteran camper with extraordinary talents as an Indian dancer, and a tragic history.

"I'm as peaceful a man as you're likely to meet in America now," an older Bridge begins the narrative, "but this is about a death I may have caused." This opening sentence ensures the

reader's attention to the very end of the story, but also sets up a letdown once he gets there. Bridge does not cause anyone's death by any stretch of the imagination. He fails to anticipate and direct an unforeseeable and uncontrollable event in another person's life, and with the pride of youth prefers to call himself guilty rather than helpless. Watchfulness, attention, looking at things and people in loving detail form the basis of Bridge Boatner's art as well as his faith; and when his young friend slips out of his sight, he faults himself.

Guilt, then, is a major theme of this novel, and it is echoed in Bridge's feelings about the Indian lore which forms much of the basis of camp life. The title suggests redemption, and signs of redemption abound throughout the book. Bridge reminds us that angels are messengers bringing news, and that Jesus taught that we are to watch for the messages. Angels are a favorite subject for his drawings and paintings, and he tells us that his first fame will come from a series of angel studies. He asks Rafe to pose for him, remembering with a shiver that Raphael was an archangel. He describes the boy Rafe as having "other-worldly looks," a "credible Angel Gabriel" who "enters a real room ten-foot square and greets the girl rising to meet him in the dim far corner, 'Hail Mary, full of grace!'" Rafe's message seems to come as he dances around the campfire, becoming the eagle he portrays as Bridge watches.

As much as he appreciates Rafe's gifts and message, Bridge has ambitions to be a messenger in his own right. Michelangelo and van Gogh, he says, "meant every picture as a forthright message, to change men's souls." He means the landscape he completes that summer in the same way, seeing a coded message that just barely eludes him in the rhythm of the mountainous panorama. It is while studying it that he feels he misses his chance to save Rafe.

One last allusion to angels comes in an almost parenthetical bow by Price to Thomas Wolfe. Bridge and a fellow counselor take a sort of pilgrimage to the Wolfe home in Asheville on a day off, and the impressionable Bridge nearly comes to the rescue of a forlorn young unwed mother who is in charge of the place.

Duke University professor Reynolds Price has written eight novels and several volumes of short stories over the last thirty years. He has created many memorable characters reacting to unusual, often overwhelming, circumstances in the midst of mundane surroundings. In this latest novel and in his autobiography, he has given his readers a great deal of himself. Recommended for school,

public, and academic libraries.

Dorothy Hodder, New Hanover County Public Library

Other Publications of Interest

For students of the history of religion in the Tar Heel state, George W. Paschal's *History of North Carolina Baptists* is indispensable. This two-volume work [published 1930 (Vol. 1) and 1955 (Vol. 2)] provides a comprehensive examination of the Baptist presence in North Carolina, from arrival in the late seventeenth century through the mid-twentieth. By the Civil War, as Paschal explains, Baptists associated with the Baptist State Convention had become the largest denomination in the state, and members of that church have continued to play a major role in Tar Heel religious life. Long out of print, Paschal's study has recently been reprinted by Church History Research and Archives (220 Graystone Drive, Gallatin, Tenn. 30766) and is available for \$54 (set). Included in the reprint volumes (601 pp., 578 pp.; hardback) are greatly expanded indexes, with more than sixteen thousand references to individuals, churches, and religion-related subjects. A list of additional church history and theology titles, some of which are offered at discounts to libraries, may be requested from the publisher.

Thomas Wolfe longed to be a playwright and applied his genius to writing for the stage early in his literary career. He is, however, best known for his long autobiographical novels. Yet some critics believe several of his short stories to be among his best work. Some of Wolfe's short fiction initially appeared in magazines and was later incorporated into his novels. In *From Death to Morning*, he collected fourteen stories. Others were drawn from his manuscripts and published posthumously. In *The Complete Short Stories of Thomas Wolfe*, editor Francis E. Skipp has gathered fifty-eight Wolfe stories, thirty-five not collected before and one published for the first time. This volume, first published in 1987, is now available in paperback (1989; Collier Books, Macmillan Publishing Co., 866 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022; 621 pp.; \$12.95; ISBN 0-02-04891-9).

The final volume in William R. Trotter's trilogy on the Civil War in North Carolina focuses on the conflict in the state's coastal region. In *Ironclads and Columbiads: The Coast*, Trotter details the struggle for control of strategic railroads and canals, the sinking of the ironclad ram *Albemarle*, the battle for Fort Fisher, and other activities

along the coast, which was the scene of more fighting than all other parts of the state combined. For reviews of the two previous volumes, *Silk Flags and Cold Steel: The Piedmont* (Vol. 1) and *Bushwhackers!: The Mountains* (Vol. 2), see *North Carolina Libraries* 47 (Summer 1989): 126-127 and (Winter 1989): 262-263, respectively. (**Ironclads and Columbiads**, Vol. 3; 1989; Piedmont Impressions, P.O. Box 29364, Greensboro, N.C. 27429; 456 pp.; \$19.95; ISBN 0-9293307-05-4; cloth.)

With ***Carolina Follies: A Nose-Tweaking Look at Life in Our Two Great and Goofy States***, veteran *Charlotte Observer* reporter Lew Powell offers incontrovertible proof that Foot-in-Mouth Disease frequently victimizes Carolinians, and that this behavior can be unintentionally hilarious or simply hard to believe. Borrowing the idea from *Esquire's* "Dubious Achievements Awards," Powell since 1977 has annually published in the *Observer* a year-end review of absurdities and *faux pas* from the Carolinas, an area he labels "a satirist's paradise." In ***Carolina Follies***, he has collected over two hundred of his favorite quotations and summaries of "screwball news," providing the reader a laugh-filled look at "the very best in foibles and foolishness." (1990; Down Home Press, P.O. Box 4126, Asheboro, N.C. 27204; 96 pp.; \$6.95; ISBN0-9624255-1-6; paper.)

The eleventh in the series of short county histories published by the Historical Publications Section of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, ***Cumberland County: A Brief History*** offers a concise but informative account of the heritage of one of North Carolina's more historic counties. Author Roy Parker, Jr., editor of the *Fayetteville Times*, ranges widely, from economic to social to political topics. Scottish Highlander settlements; the development of Fayetteville as a political, economic, and cultural center; the destruction of an important Confederate arsenal; and the establishment of Fort Bragg are but a few Cumberland highlights included. (1990; Historical Publications Section, 109 East Jones Street, Raleigh, N.C. 27601-2807; 158 pp.; \$6.00, plus \$2.00 postage; ISBN 0-86526-243-8; paper.)

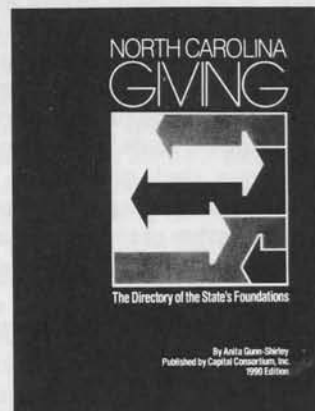
The Historical Publications Section has also recently published Volume XII in its acclaimed ***North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster*** series. This volume covers the Forty-ninth through Fifty-second Regiments, North Carolina Troops, Confederate infantry. In addition to the roster of soldiers, compiler Weymouth T. Jordan, Jr., provides unit histories. (1990; Historical Publications, 109 East Jones Street, Raleigh, N.C. 27601-2807; 565 pp.; \$27.00, plus \$3.00 postage; ISBN 0-86526-017-6 (Vol. XII), 0-86526-005-2 (series); cloth.)

North Carolina Giving: The Directory of the State's Foundations

North Carolina Giving is the most complete, authoritative guide to the state's more than 700 private charitable and community foundations. It is a vital resource for nonprofit organizations and institutions, or for anyone seeking grants.

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