

Dorothy Hodder, Compiler

C

aswell County Training School (CCTS) was well known in North Carolina during the days of segregation because it had a reputation for educational excellence. Having lived through that era, I looked forward to reading what Vanessa Siddle Walker had to say about the Caswell community with great anticipation. Walker said that *Their Highest Potential* is not about segregated schools versus desegregated schools. She set the stage for the reader by giving a few facts about the environment that existed during the period she writes about. Her research in public documents shows that conditions of the schools for blacks in North Carolina's segregated education system were dismal, although North Carolina was viewed as being the South's most progressive state in education in 1935. A commission with equal representation of blacks and whites reported that "the buildings now in use for colored students are in a poor state, poorly lighted and heated, the furniture is antiquated" and "very few rural colored schools are equipped with modern single desks." In 1954, the value of school property for black students was \$70, versus \$217 for white students. Also, North Carolina required the segregation of textbooks used by black and white children. Conditions like these were common for black students in North Carolina and throughout the United States before the Freedom Riders and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

Walker allows the reader to take a step back in time and form a relationship with a rural African American community that in the early 1930s dreamed what seemed like the impossible dream. She introduces a very unfunny subject with a light-hearted look at the events that led to the beginning of the "education" movement by blacks in Caswell County, North Carolina. She tells the story of "Chicken Stephens," a white man whose house wound up being used to house black elementary school students. She weaves a compelling story of the effects of racism on the lives of the Caswell County community when segregation was a fact and a way of life in North Carolina. As Walker so effectively shows in her book, segregation did nothing to diminish the thirst for knowledge in Caswell County's African American community.

Because education was a top priority for this community, it was incorporated into the very fabric of everyday life. Parents made demands of the county school board and the state administration just like their white counterparts. Unfortunately, their needs always took a low or no priority. Undaunted in their quest, Caswell county parents worked side by side with local teachers to help students achieve at their "highest potential." Failure to learn was not an option in a community that personified the very essence of "working together — meeting needs — we are family."

Walker captures the spirit of Caswell County's black community, showing how it educated its own from the turn of the century through the late 1960s. She greatly emphasizes the altruistic nature of the Caswell County African American community, showing that there was "no poverty of spirit," when she describes the parents' contributions made during the Depression years. They struggled to provide supplemental support of money and free labor to aid in the schooling of their children, building schools, providing transportation and food, and doing just about anything that would help their children. School was not just about book learning to them; it was about achieving one's highest potential. Walker quotes from accountings by Thomas Sowell where he noted that the schools were remembered as having atmospheres where support, encourage-

Vanessa Siddle Walker.

***Their Highest Potential:  
An African American School  
Community in the Segregated South.***

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.  
259pp. Cloth \$34.95. ISBN 0-8078-2276-0;  
Paper \$14.95. ISBN 0-8078-4581-7.

ment, and rigid standards were combined to enhance students' self-worth and increase their aspiration to achieve. The Caswell County black community supported an educational environment that was tantamount to a "womb to tomb" commitment. The "whole" child was sustained from elementary school to high school and beyond. Many former students returned to teach in the community. In her research, Walker found reference to a 1949 yearbook that was dedicated to the "patrons," commending those who worked untiringly for a better school and facilities. Also, the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges (SASC) in its 1953 report said, "due recognition should be given the principal, teachers, students, and patrons (mostly parents) for needed supplies and equipment."

Many names of parents and teachers deserve to be on the Caswell Community honor roll for their perseverance and dedication. One of these is N. L. Dillard, a moving force in the educational advancements made in the Caswell County community from the time of his arrival in 1930 to the day he was honored in 1968. He played a significant role in getting a high school for blacks started in Caswell county. He would later become the principal of the "infamous" Caswell County Training School.

The author did an exceptional job of focusing on the "sense of community and family" that was so evident in her findings. Through a combination of oral histories and public records, Walker developed a sequence of historical facts into an easy-to-read book. She moves the reader through what could easily have been just a regulation history of the Caswell County's black community.

For many, this book will be an eye-opener. For me, it was reliving the past. It is but one of myriad stories that can be told by African Americans. This book is strengthened by the author's inclusion of information about her methodology, which will be genuinely helpful to others who wish to attempt writing this type of story. The "notes to pages" section, divided by chapters, lends credibility to the book as a whole. The book includes a bibliography and index.

This book is suited for academic and public libraries. Also, I would strongly recommend it as mandatory reading for students of North Carolina history.

Vanessa Siddle Walker is an assistant professor of educational studies at Emory University and is co-author of *Facing Racism in American Education*.

— Barbara S. Akinwale  
State Library of North Carolina

**N**

orth Carolina author Sue Ellen Bridgers has written a novel about an ill-fated marriage between Bethany Newell and Joel Calder. Set in Depression-era North Carolina, the story shows these various aspects of their courtship: Bethany and Joel's delight with each other, Bethany living with her Aunt Charlotte who opposed the marriage, Bethany's alcoholic father, Joel's farming parents, and Joel's dark side. No matter what the obstacles, Joel and Bethany are both stubborn, and the marriage does take place. The rest of the novel depicts a cycle of abuse leading to a horrifying conclusion.

The second sentence of the book: "It was dawn following a cold clear night, the kind of morning you'd want for a hogkilling," is portentous, and, without obtrusive explanation, shows the operation of farm life. Bridgers effectively uses small amounts of information to depict the setting, and there is a good choice of words to show the personalities of the characters.

Sue Ellen Bridgers.

### ***All We Know of Heaven.***

Wilmington: Banks Channel Books, 1996.  
212 pp. \$22.00. ISBN 0-9635967-4-8.

Bridgers uses various characters to tell the story in her book. While the process of adjusting from one viewpoint to another has negative effect on continuity, it has a positive effect on understanding. The reader may gain understanding about a wife's acceptance of abuse from her husband. The writing style presents more rounded characters than might have been possible otherwise because it shows what

several people thought about an event. Even a secondary character, Aunt Charlotte, has more than one side revealed as the book progresses.

Although this book is being targeted at the adult market, Bridgers is known for her young adult novels such as *Home Before Dark* and *All Together Now*. While it takes some effort to get involved in the book, that effort will be rewarded by finding out that, for a troubled soul, love may not be enough. Recommended for fiction collections in public libraries and school libraries serving older teenagers.

— Mel Burton  
Gaston County Public Library

**A**

frican American, southern, and women's history are all enjoying a boomlet of sophisticated and revealing writing. The present book, a reworking of a Chapel Hill dissertation, makes a significant contribution to all three areas. All historians have to read behind their documents, to be attentive to nuances and contradictions in written evidence, but students of gender and racial minorities must be doubly so. Gilmore, a descendent of a distinguished white North Carolina family, fulfills this need while assembling the evidence from a wide range of obscure sources. Her conclusions, based on feminist and racialist theory, are in general convincing.

Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore.

***Gender & Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920***

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996. 384 pp. Cloth, \$49.95. 0-8078-2287-6. Paper, \$17.95. 0-8078-4596-5.

The period under review was the nadir of African American history: black economic status declined and political rights deteriorated while segregation laws were enacted and enforced. As black men lost the right to vote, black women mobilized to gain influence. *Gender & Jim Crow* is important in resurrecting the voices of these women. Unfortunately, only a small number of voices have been recovered, mainly of relatively well-educated "middle-class" black women. Most of Gilmore's work rests on evidence from Salisbury and New Bern, with less but interesting evidence from Charlotte and Wilmington.

Gilmore's reading of the Wilmington Riot of 1898 indicts the Democrats for whipping up racial hatred through loud and deliberate embellishments of rape stories, while she blames the Republicans for crassly abandoning their black allies after 1900. Although opportunities for higher education of black women declined after

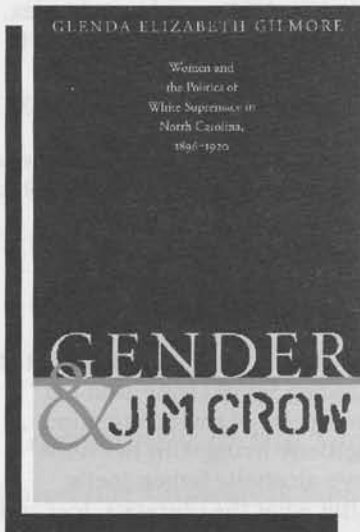
disenfranchisement in 1901, their public role expanded with the growth of Progressive government. Gilmore's own bias comes through, however, when she praises black feminists for using white rhetoric for their own uses but criticizes James Shepard for the same thing.

The UNC Press does its usual fine job of printing, but the index has misleading gaps and does not cover the excellent endnotes. The illustrations are well-placed but not particularly revealing. Charlotte was not the state's largest city until 1910, but otherwise Gilmore has done her homework well. The writing is clear and mercifully free of jargon.

Gilmore's *Gender & Jim Crow* adds depth and breadth to our ever-increasing vision of black diversity in history. It fits well within the territory explored by Jacqueline Jones's *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow* (1985) and complements Higginbotham's *Righteous Discontent* and Greenwood's *Bittersweet Legacy*. All libraries interested in North Carolina or African American history should add this title to their collections.

— Patrick Valentine

Wilson County Public Library



**S**

herman's March Through North Carolina: A Chronology, by Angley, Cross, and Hill, three researchers from the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources's Division of Archives and History, details Sherman's effective use of destruction, terrorism, and laying waste to land to cripple a people and end a war.

As the introduction explains, in May 1994 the Cape Fear Living History

Society proposed a monument commemorating Union troops. The resentment from North Carolinians was overwhelming. In light of Sherman's March, the reader can easily understand why the people of North Carolina rejected the proposed statue of General William Tecumseh Sherman for the Bentonville Battleground State Historic Site. On their famous March, Sherman and his troops created a pain to last for decades.

This well-researched book impresses the reader with day-to-day accounts and stories written by members of Sherman's army, escaped slaves, and individual noncombatants, recollecting how they were pillaged of belongings or suffered bodily harm. The book is well-balanced, describing how both Union

Wilson Angley, Jerry L. Cross, and Michael Hill.

***Sherman's March Through North Carolina: A Chronology.***

Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1995. 129 pp. Paper, \$8.00. ISBN 0-86526-266-7.



and Confederate troops, particularly deserters, took advantage of an unprotected populace. For example, on March 4, 1865, the *Daily Conservative* of Raleigh reported that desperadoes or outlaw Confederates threatened a lone widow of Guilford, tying a rope around her neck, until she gave them her hidden money. Descriptions such as this evoke pity for the innocent. The strength of this book is that it tells the story of Sherman's March through the voices of its victims. The authors set up interesting contrasts in viewpoint, such as a Union diarist from Minnesota who recorded how inviting the landscape and people of Warren County were, next to a diarist from Louisburg who records her indignation towards Federal cavalry companies coming into town.

Each section of the book has informative endnotes. The book includes an interesting bibliography and a useful index. The four maps included are, unfortunately, black and white copies of colored originals and do not distinguish well between roads and troop movements. No photographs or portraits are included. In all, this is a well-balanced look at the experiences of troops and civilians alike, with excellent descriptions of sites and personal encounters. Recommended for all North Carolina history collections.

— Joseph Shepard

New Hanover County Public Library



his is the third in a series of novels which are set in Mitford, a friendly village somewhere in the hills of North Carolina. The first, *At Home in Mitford*, was an American Booksellers Book of the Year nominee. *Light in the Window* is the second, and, apparently there are more to follow the most recent title. According to the publisher, the author was a successful advertising executive before moving to her current home in Blowing Rock.

All three novels revolve around Father Timothy Kavanaugh, an Episcopal priest in his early sixties, who ministers to his parishioners and neighbors while dealing with his own shortcomings. As *These High Green Hills* begins, Father Tim, until recently a bachelor, is happily adjusting to married life with his energetic wife, Cynthia. This change serves as background while the priest and his neighbors cope with a variety of problems ranging from the merely sticky (how to tell an elderly strong-willed financial pillar of the church that she should no longer drive) to the very serious (rescuing a child from an abusive father). He also encounters personal trials such as facing his fears while lost in a cave and feelings of jealousy toward longtime friends. In the end all these matters, both pastoral and personal, are satisfactorily resolved as courage and caring prevail.

While Mitford as a place provides overall structure to the varying threads of the narrative, the North Carolina setting is incidental. Although there is a mention of trillium and other native plants and of someone going to Asheville and a church bulletin from Canton,

Mitford is not grounded in, nor does it convey, a feeling of North Carolina or the Appalachian Mountains. Mitford could be anywhere in the South, yet it is a special place. Its appeal is that most of its citizens live in a state of Grace.

This book is well-written, by turns humorous and sad, yet always hopeful. There is an audience that will treasure this series. Recommended for most public libraries.

— Bill Kirwan

Western Carolina University

Jan Karon.

### ***These High Green Hills.***

New York: Viking, 1996. 333 pp. \$22.95  
ISBN 0-670-86934-1.

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\* Due to a computer glitch, Dorothy Hodder needs the addresses and phone numbers of all persons who have reviewed, or are interested in reviewing books for this section. Please refer to Editorial Staff on page 43 for reply address. —  
Thank you.

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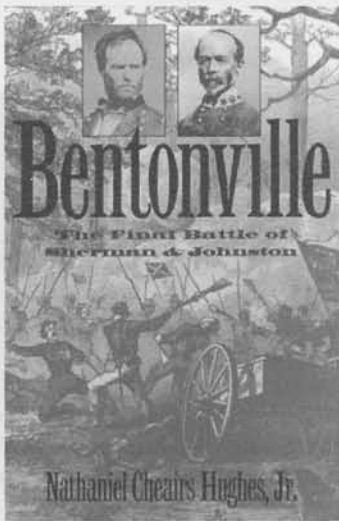
**N**

athaniel Cheairs Hughes, Jr., with determination not unlike that of William Tecumseh Sherman himself, conducted research for some forty years before completing this thoroughly documented and well-written account of North Carolina's only major Civil War battle. As the extensive bibliography reveals, the author examined scores of original manuscript collections located throughout the country and many other primary and secondary sources. Hughes uses these materials not only to provide an accurate and objective description of his subject, but also to enliven it with fascinating quotes from participants of the battle. Consequently, *Bentonville* will be useful to scholars and interesting to laymen who thrive on knowledge of this gallant and tragic period of our history.

Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, Jr.

## ***Bentonville: The Final Battle of Sherman and Johnston.***

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996. xix, 336 pp. \$37.50. ISBN 0-8078-2281-7.



The Battle of Bentonville took place during March 19-21, 1865, in and around this small community in southern Johnston County. The engagement involved the forces of Union General William T. Sherman and Confederate General Joseph Eggleston Johnston. Sherman's greatly superior troops, fresh from victories in Georgia and South Carolina, were marching toward Goldsboro, with its strategic intersection of major rail lines, preparatory to their goal of defeating Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Johnston assembled remnants of weary Confederate forces in a desperate surprise attack that was destined to fail.

Hughes does much more than simply describe the intricate military tactics of the battle (though he does this in considerable detail). First, he places the battle in the context of the final stages of the Civil War. To help readers understand the engagement, the author fully develops the character of many of the key Union and Confederate officers, thus explaining why they took certain steps. He shows also how rank-and-file soldiers felt about their leaders. Hughes analyzes the battle, pointing out brilliant maneuvers and costly mistakes. He explains the overall significance of Bentonville.

*Bentonville: The Final Battle of Sherman and Johnston*, is the work of a seasoned Civil War historian who has written university press books pertaining to Gideon J. Pillow, William J. Hardee, and the Battle of Belmont. Although the quality and usefulness of the illustrations and maps do not match those of Mark L. Bradley's *Last Stand in the Carolinas: The Battle of Bentonville* (Campbell, CA: Savas Woodbury Publishers, 1996), Hughes's book will be of great interest to many patrons of academic and public libraries.

— Maurice C. York  
East Carolina University

**A**

t the edge of the Blue Ridge Parkway near Boone, a lovely mansion sits on the side of a hill overlooking vast tracks of forest and a beautiful lake. Each year thousands of people visit this site, the Moses H. Cone Memorial Park, to admire the vistas, walk the extensive trail system, and make purchases of Appalachian crafts from the gift shop inside. The house and the park are part of the fascinating story of Moses H. Cone and, in particular, his influence on this area of North Carolina.

Philip T. Noblitt.

## ***A Mansion in the Mountains: the Story of Moses & Bertha Cone & Their Blowing Rock Manor.***

Boone: Parkway Publishers Inc., 1996. 216 pp.  
Paper, \$14.95. ISBN 1887905-02-2.

Although his name is associated more often with the city of Greensboro, Moses Cone also had a dramatic impact on Blowing Rock and Watauga County. Cone began acquiring land on and around Flat Top Mountain near Blowing Rock in the 1880s so that he could build a home in what was then considered a more healthy climate. The concept of Flat Top Manor, a home built to reflect its owner's wealth and social standing, and its surrounding environment, was modeled after that of the Biltmore estate in Asheville. Careful attention was paid to the mansion's site, its system of internal carriage pathways, landscaping, and grounds maintenance. Cone, imitating Vanderbilt's interest in forestry, even brought in experts to begin the scientific farming of apples. Throughout his later life, Flat Top Manor remained Cone's

favorite residence. While using the mansion for social and family activities, Cone also made it a base for his efforts to promote education and business in the local area. He purchased land for local public schools and was influential in the development of what later became Appalachian State University. At Cone's death in 1908, his widow, Bertha, inherited the mansion, which then entered a new phase of its existence. The story of Bertha's management of the estate is as interesting as that of its construction. Throughout her later life, Bertha opposed the Blue Ridge Parkway's development plans which she felt would destroy the very type of environment that her husband had worked so hard to build. Only after her death was the property conveyed to the National Park Service.

Philip Noblitt, an interpretive specialist for the Blue Ridge Parkway, has written a very interesting and well-researched volume that combines biography with social history and architectural detail to explain the important role of Flat Top Manor in the life of the Cone Family and on the surrounding area. Details about the estate's management, the lives of the Cones and Moses' business activities are skillfully combined in a fast-paced narrative. The author also describes the National Park Service's acquisition of the property and its management approach. Several black-and-white photographs of the Cones and their home are included, along with extensive footnotes, a full bibliography, and an index.

This volume will appeal to anyone interested in North Carolina history and especially to those who have visited or intend to visit the Moses H. Cone Memorial Park. This work is highly recommended for all North Caroliniana collections and especially for public and high school library collections.

— John Welch

State Library of North Carolina



very time I find myself stopped at a railroad crossing, I revert to my childhood practice of counting the cars. *History on Steel Wheels* has a similar effect, luring the reader into viewing the rolling stock through the photographs and bringing the rail to life through photos of the workers through the ages. Railroad historian Jackson McQuigg wrote this book as an enhancement to the North Carolina

Transportation Museum in Spencer, NC. He provides detailed histories of some of the more interesting rail cars and engines found at the museum, and through railroading, gives a better understanding of one aspect of North Carolina history.

McQuigg begins this rich little 86-page book with a brief history of Spencer Shops, then devotes one chapter each to a specific item of rolling stock at the museum. Six of the thirteen chapters cover locomotives, all with very different histories. The locomotives featured are diesel-electric, steam, diesel, and all-electric. The remaining chapters feature a caboose, a US Army hospital car, a 'Jim Crow' segregated coach car, the private cars of James B. Duke and U.S. Steel President Charles Schwab, and two sleeping cars, one by Pullman and the other by Southern Railway. The rail companies represented include most of the major lines in the state, including the aforementioned Southern, Norfolk & Western, Norfolk Southern, Seaboard Air Line, Piedmont and Northern, and Atlantic Coast Line, plus a lesser-known timber railroad, the short-lived Graham County Railroad. The final chapter gives brief information about six other locomotives and a post-office car. Each chapter ends with a short bibliography for further reading.

This book is meant as a supplement to a visit to Spencer Shops, although it is useful to anyone interested in the history of railroads. McQuigg's writing alternates between technical information about the trains to history of the railroad and the cars. Neither approach dominates, so the book will appeal to all rail buffs. This book is suitable for libraries with transportation and/or North Carolina collections in high school, college, and public libraries.

— Lucy A. Powell  
Hiddenite Center

Jackson McQuigg.

### ***History on Steel Wheels: Trains at the North Carolina Transportation Museum.***

Spencer: North Carolina Transportation  
History Corporation, 1996. 86 pp. \$9.95.  
ISBN 0-96427-49-0-6.

Dist. by NC Transportation Museum,  
ATTN: Gift Station, Box 165, Spencer, NC 28159.



## OTHER PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

*Bridges of Madison County, Jr.* is the kindest thing possible to be said about *The Notebook*, by Nicholas Sparks. Purportedly set in New Bern in 1946, the novel evokes neither the place nor the time. The young author is a native of Nebraska, now living in South Carolina, and seems to have developed very little sense yet of Southern manners, dress, history, speech, or race relations. Warner Books showed equal indifference to local landscape by selecting a photograph of a porch looking out on distant mountains for the cover. The story is meant to be a romantic weeper with literary pretensions—the publisher included packs of tissues with the press package—but the writing is stilted, tedious, and overblown. The narrator describes himself on the second page, "I am nothing special; of this I am sure. I am a common man with common thoughts, and I've led a common life. There are no monuments dedicated to me and my name will soon be forgotten, but I've loved another with all my heart and soul, and to me, this has always been enough." Many readers will agree that's plenty, and close the book. Romance readers may request this in public libraries. (1996; Warner Books, 1271 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020; 214 pp; \$16.95; ISBN 0-446-52080-2.)

A better novel of local interest is *Sunset Beach: A Spirited Love Story*, by Trip Purcell. It was the thing to read at Sunset Beach this summer, and was commonly referred to as *The Bridges of Sunset Beach*. A beach romance about a beach romance, it doesn't pretend to be anything else. (1996; Research Triangle Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 1223, Fuquay-Varina, NC 27526; 336 pp; paper, \$12.95; ISBN 1-884570-47-X.)

North Carolina fiction junkies will love *Books of Passage: 27 North Carolina Writers on the Books that Changed Their Lives*. Editor David Perkins has included the well-known (Clyde Edgerton writing about Ralph Waldo Emerson, Reynolds Price on *Madame Bovary*) and the little-known (Toril Moi on *The Second Sex* and Jane Tompkins on *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*), as well as the completely offbeat (Fred Chappell on Julia Child). The brief essays have appeared as a series in the *Raleigh News and Observer*; each one is followed by a very brief note about the writer's life and career. The book is illustrated with David Terry's drawings of the writers, which seem to be based on familiar photographs. Some pictures work better than others — Philip Gerard's in particular does not. (1996; Down Home Press, P.O. Box 4126, Asheboro, NC 27204; 204 pp; \$22.95; ISBN 1-878086-53-7.)

*The Heart of Dixie: Southern Rebels, Renegades, and Heroes* is an interesting collection of columns and essays written by Frye Gaillard over the last eighteen years, about "various Southern notable people who have made a difference." Some North Carolinians included are evangelist Billy Graham, banker Hugh McColl, and basketball star David Thompson. Many of these pieces originally appeared in the *Charlotte Observer*. (1996; Down Home Press, P.O. Box 4126, Asheboro, NC 27204; 208 pp; paper, \$14.95; ISBN 1-878086-50-2.)

Terry Collins, a Mount Airy boy, has written *The Andy Griffith Story*, an unauthorized biography illustrated with drawings. He includes a filmography, discography, list of Broadway roles, selected list of Griffith's endorsements, and a bibliography. (1995; Explorer Press, PO Box 1907, Mount Airy, NC 27030; 175 pp; cloth, \$23.95; ISBN 1-887138-00-5; paper, \$12.95; ISBN 1-887138-01-3.)

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