

New North Carolina Books

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ANN DEAGON. *Poetics South*. (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, Publisher, 1974). Available in most book stores, \$4.95.

Poets, like all creative artists, are not ordinary mortals. They see things in the mundane experiences of life that, for the most of us, remain unseen. The artist who publishes, be it music, fiction, poetry or whatever, must suffer the silences and blind stares of those who gaze but do not see, who read but do not comprehend. I am certain that many who turn the pages of this first collection of poems will not see what Ann Deagon sees. But, no matter. Poetry, once written, exists for its own sake. Who reads it or, for that matter, who likes it, is a secondary matter, perhaps another thing entirely.

Poetics South contains twenty-nine poems, some of which have appeared earlier in other publications. The poems speak of many things: Alabama railroad towns, a black man fleeing from the chain gang, a lover's touch, hospital rooms, old maids in Southern towns, cavorting goats, and, best of all, the celebration of life in the heart-beat of a living child. Some critics have slapped the "eroticism" label on Deagon's poetry. This is an exaggeration, if not a misreading, of what the poet is saying. Her effort is to capture the human condition, all of it, in words; she doesn't censor her muse (and Deagon listens to all nine of them) in response to any form of propriety. These poems spring from the full

life of a many-talented woman; Southerner, mate, wife, mother, teacher, scholar, linguist, social critic, earth mother to lost souls, builder of fences. And last, a remarkably successful new poet from whom we shall hear again, "if nothin' don't happen."

WALLACE R. DRAUGHON. *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in North Carolina*. (Durham: Durham Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1974). Pictures, statistics, geneological tables. Order from the publisher.

This book represents the first effort of the Mormon Church outside of the state of Utah to record its activities in book form. It is a historical account of the founding and growth of the church in North Carolina, particularly the Durham Ward. It is primarily a geneological work, valuable for those who need information about Mormon missionaries who lived and worked in North Carolina. It would be of some historical value to anyone interested in the activities of one of the less well known religious sects in the state.

F. ROY JOHNSON. *Supernaturals Among Carolina Folk and Their Neighbors*. (Murfreesboro: Johnson Publishing Company, 1974). Illustrations by Judy Godwin Mizelle.

In the introductory essay of this volume the author explains why early settlers in North Carolina were so fond of storytelling . . . especially "idle tales of fairies and witches." Our folk tradition is rich with these yarns, and it seems to get richer as the years go by. Even in this day of electronics, instant communications, and rational thought, people persist in their appetites for stories of banshees, devils, and monster children. This book is a collection of such stories, many of which appear here in print for the first time. Most of them have come down by word-of-mouth and the author includes a bibliography which provides the names of the people from which the stories were obtained. North Carolinians who have a fancy for ghost stories will enjoy this book.

HELEN HILL MILLER. *Historic Places Around The Outer Banks*. (Charlotte: McNally and Loftin, Publishers, 1974). Photographs and Commentaries.

JOHN FOSTER WEST and BRUCE ROBERTS. *This Proud Land*. (Charlotte: McNally and Loftin, Publishers, 1974). Photographs and Poetry.

We owe a debt of gratitude to McNally and Loftin for publishing these two priceless volumes. Before too many years, if the industrial and commercial development of North Carolina continues apace, the beauty of the Outer Banks and the Western Mountains will remain only in books such as these. For those of us who live in the clutter and neon ugliness of the Piedmont, a trip to the Outer Banks or the Blue Ridge still provides a renewal of faith in the land and the sea. But each year the primeval beauty of our heritage slips away bit by bit . . . lost to the obscene quest for profit and progress.

Helen Hill Miller's photographs of the Outer Banks and her commentary on the life of the region will delight those who retain a fascination for this unique place. The photographs of Bruce Roberts and the poetry of John Foster West capture the majesty of the mountains and the pride,

simplicity, and toil of mountain people. The heritage of the mountains, too often forgotten now, can be perceived in the faces of Samuel Davidson, John Williams, Big Tom, Aunt Orlena, Sam Green, Pink Washborn, and the nameless mountain children standing in the doorways of crude log cabins. Every reader will share the poet's lament, "Why must we mountain folk go . . . vanish." These two slender volumes belong in every North Carolina library.

EDWIN ARTHUR WEST. *Elise High School and Upper Moore County*. (New Bern: Owen G. Dunn Co., 1974). Pictures, statistics, index. \$10.00. Order from the author, 112 Spruce Street, Washington, N.C. 27889.

This book was commissioned by The North Carolina Presbyterian Historical Society and the Alumni Association of The Elise High School. It is a thoroughly researched and carefully documented account of one of the many private academies that flourished in North Carolina before the coming of state supported public schools. Private and church schools played an important role in education in North Carolina during the early days. Unfortunately, too little is written about them and they are remembered only by those who had some direct contact either with the institutions or with the courageous and dedicated people who operated and supported these schools. The book is also a county history; it gives an interesting account of the people who settled Moore County and the social, political, and industrial growth of this area of the state. Like many county histories, the organization and continuity of the book suffers from the inclusion of so many facts and details. But West handles this problem about as well as it could be handled, and his story is interesting and relatively easy to follow. The book is a valuable contribution to the history of education in North Carolina and to local history. The index has been carefully prepared, and will be useful to those interested in genealogy.