

New North Carolina Books

by William C. Burris
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HUNTER JAMES. *The Quiet People Of The Land: A Story Of The North Carolina Moravians In Revolutionary Times.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1976.) \$7.95.

When must religious principle give way to political obligation? To what degree can dissent be tolerated in a new nation subjected to the strains of development? How long can a community committed to the principle of common ownership of property survive in a nation dedicated to the idea that the rights and property of individuals must take precedence over the needs of the whole society? How can pacifists coexist with neighbors who must fight to gain the independence of all? These are some of the questions raised by this superbly written and beautifully designed little volume about the Moravian people of North Carolina. The answers are brought out in a historical narrative, following the Moravians from their origins in central Europe in the 15th century to the

close of the War For Independence in 18th Century America.

Hunter is a journalist, but he writes like a poet. And his book is no ordinary "church history" publication. It is history, well studied and well written. He tells the story of the Moravians in their early struggles to survive on the frontier, their difficulties with the Regulators and the colonial authorities of North Carolina, and their dilemma during the Revolution when they wanted independence but were bound by their religion to life of peace. His major point is that the experiences of the Moravians contributed significantly to the acceptance of dissent as legitimate in North Carolina. Every North Carolina library should have this book.

ROBERT B. DOWNS. *Books That Changed The South.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977.) \$10.95.

Robert B. Downs, emeritus dean of

library administration at the University of Illinois, has long been a proponent of the theory that books shape life and culture. This theory, argued in earlier books such as *Books That Changed The World*, *Books That Changed America*, and *Molders Of The Modern Mind*, is advanced here again as an explanation of the peculiar patterns of Southern life.

This volume contains twenty-five short essays or "reviews" of books concerned with various aspects of Southern history, fiction, and social life. Arranged chronologically from 1624 to 1951, the book includes writings that vary from Fanny Kemble's *Journal* to W. J. Cash's *The Mind Of The South*. As would be expected the books selected for review treat, in some manner, the central importance of race as a factor in understanding the South.

Professor Downs doesn't really make his case. In fact, he doesn't even try to make it. He merely offers his theory — books shaped Southern life — and then briefly reviews a series of books written about Southern subjects. This theory is rather quaint; always satisfying and almost self-justifying to those of us who live in the world of books. We read books, write books, teach books, live with books; therefore, books must be more important than anything else. It is almost impossible to prove, and I doubt that it is true. You can marshal as much evidence against the theory as you can to support it. Can it not be argued that books reflect culture far more than they shape it? Can it not be argued that Southern culture has been shaped by forces, people and historical circumstances that are far removed from the writings of intellectuals? The point here is not which theory is true; the point is that a book with a title like this one ought to explain to the reader why the theory seems valid to the author. The reader will know more about the South when he fin-

ishes the book, but he won't know why the material he has read shaped Southern life. The book would be much stronger if the author had included an introductory essay arguing the validity of this thesis.

As a review of selected writings about the South, this book is worthwhile. But it contributes very little to our understanding of why the South is like it is. All the writings were already available; bringing them together as Downs has done here serves little purpose. Public libraries should have it available for the general reader. College and universities need it only to keep their collections complete.

JANET SHAFFER. *Peter Francisco — Virginia Giant*. (Durham: Moore Publishing Company, 1976.) \$7.50.

Peter Francisco was the hero of the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. He has become something of a legend over the years and his name is becoming the most widely known of any common soldier of the Revolutionary War. I knew about him and I have seen the monument erected in his honor on the battlefield near Greensboro, but I didn't know about the growing interest in his career until I read this book. Ms. Shaffer's work is part fiction, part fact; it is based on the slim historical records that exist, but she has added fictional characters and situations to flesh out the story. Basically, the book is a novel; though its purpose is to record as many facts about the life of Francisco as possible. The genre is entirely appropriate here, given the absence of sufficient material to write a straight historical account. Ms. Shaffer writes well, and she has successfully blended fact and imagination. The book is highly recommended for young readers. Francisco fans will, of course, welcome another account such as this.

SAMUEL A. HOWARD. *JurisImprudence: Corpus Juris Ridiculorum!* (Durham: Moore Publishing Company, 1976.) \$8.95.

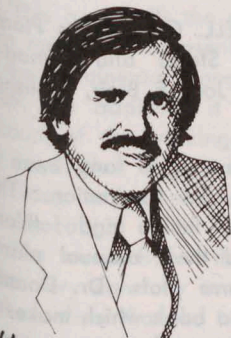
Every specialized group has its own form of humor. We have preacher's stories, physician's stories, professor's stories, prisoner's stories — and on and on. Getting trapped in one of these groups with their "in-jokes" can be sheer misery if you know nothing of the experiences from which the humor springs. Such humor is appreciated beyond the group only if it involves those aspects of human behavior that are common to us all.

This book is a collection of humorous events, sayings, and circumstances in the world of lawyers and judges. Since we all must live with the law, and men of every station march through the halls of justice sooner or later, these stories should have a wide appeal. They tend to be mildly amusing rather than uproariously funny, but many people will certainly enjoy them. Several chapters focus on the judicial process in such a way as to reveal the downright ridiculous nature of certain aspects of the law. The author is an experienced lawyer who has been around a long time. He has a sharp eye for the foibles of human nature. It is recommended to

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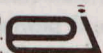
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public libraries for circulation among general readers.

ELLEN TURLINGTON JOHNSTON. *We Don't Do Nothin' In Here.* (Durham: Moore Publishing Company, 1976.) \$4.95.

This book is not a successful poetry volume. Why? In a sentence, the poetry that is here is literally overwhelmed by an endless barrage of wordy observations that seem, at least to this reader, to have little to do with poetry as an art form. Knowing what to leave out of a poem is as important as knowing what to leave in. "Letting it all hang out" (a quote from the dust-jacket) rarely leads to good poetry. Ms. Johnston has not followed this well-seasoned rule. Perhaps she doesn't agree with it . . . and many modern poets do not. That, of course, is her privilege. As is the case with all poetry, the reader must make his own judgment, and let the critics "quibble on."

The author states in the Preface that her work is "the unvarnished, unexpurgated truth." She also states that "poems kept happening in and around my classroom, and I kept writing them down, until — suddenly — *We Don't Do Nothin' In Here!* happened." It seems to me that right here is where she went wrong. First, telling the truth, unvarnished and unexpurgated, is not the same as writing poetry. Second, and more importantly, poems don't happen; they must be written in a highly disciplined way in response to one's muse. Poems are not events; they are the expression of feelings or experiences that have been internalized. Restraint is essential to poetic expression.

Many of the entries here suggest that the author believes that everything that happens in her classroom is poetry. She only need jot it down; or, in several entries, just throw the words at the page. I find

this use of undisciplined graphics extremely disconcerting. Though it must be said that mine is a view that is not widely shared. Take it for what it's worth.

There is some good poetry here. I especially liked "I Will Never Know," "And So I Passed," "The Secret," "All I Needed" and several others. But the problem with the book as a poetry volume is simply this; the reader has to hunt for the poetry.

Ms. Johnson is certainly a sensitive teacher who cares about children. Her love and concern show on these pages. She is also a good poet. But the book as an addition to an on-going poetry series leaves too much to be desired. Had the book been published as a report by one person on the trials and joys of teaching poetry in the public schools it could stand on its own merit very well. The book should be read because it raises quite clearly a question that needs attention: What is poetry? And we are all entitled to find our own answers to that question.

DONALD E. SCHNELL. *Carnivorous Plants of the United States and Canada.* (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, Publisher 1976.)

Carnivorous plants have long been a source of interest and fascination. The literature of science fiction and folklore has frequently used these unusual plants as themes for bizarre plots. Dr. Donald Schnell has written a book which makes a notable scientific contribution to our knowledge of these unique plants. He combines plant morphology, anatomy, physiology, taxonomy, and ecology in a way that will be of interest to both the professional and amateur botanist.

The numerous photographs in color of individual plants and habitats enhance the value of this book. It is divided into separate sections for each genus. Within each section there are given the scientific and

common names of each species, the range of that species, flowering and trap seasons, a complete description, and a general section describing interesting and unusual features of each species. There is also a useful section on the culture of North American carnivorous plants. It must be stated that he emphasizes the importance of conserving native plants and utilizing commercial sources for private gardens. Most people do not have an opportunity to see these plants in their native habitats; this book will fill an important gap in their knowledge. Since almost half of the plants described are native to North Carolina, this book should be in every library and on the book shelves of every amateur and professional botanist.

William E. Fulcher

DAVID T. MORGAN and WILLIAM J. SCHMIDT. *North Carolinians In The Continental Congress*. (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, Publisher, 1976.) \$7.95.

This book tells the story of the seventeen men who represented North Carolina in the Continental Congress from 1774 to 1789. In addition, it provides a good account of the workings of the Congress, the issues that engaged its members, and the long range problems that faced a people caught up in a revolution.

The research for the book has been done very carefully and objectively. The authors show that the North Carolina representatives were not especially able or distinguished. Indeed, with the possible exception of three or four men, the state delegation was composed of ordinary men with strong regional prejudices. Lack of talent, together with the severe communications problems with the state, meant that North Carolina's influence in the Congress was less than might have been desired. But the point is that North Carolina was there. Weak they might have been, but

the representatives were able to speak for the state's interest against the stronger and more distinguished delegations from Virginia and Massachusetts.

This book is a valuable contribution to North Carolina history. It brings together in one publication a story that, heretofore, has been scattered among many sources. Its one weakness is the absence of adequate documentation; students attempting to trace a point back to the original source cannot do so because there are no footnotes. The inclusion of a good bibliography does not correct the problem. No doubt, the book has been published for the general reader and a decision was made not to burden the text with the documentation that certainly must have been a part of the manuscript. It is an understandable omission, but a regrettable one.

All libraries should add this book to their collections. College libraries, in particular, should not overlook it.

FRANK L. WATSON. *Been There And Back*. (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, Publisher, 1976.) \$8.95. \$3.95 in paper.

Readers of this journal may be familiar with the term "Young Barbarians," made popular by Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Frank Watson, the author of this "autobiography of a criminal," comes as close to fitting that description as one could imagine. From his teenage years until the age of fifty, he robbed, wenched, and slugged his way back and forth across the country from North Carolina to California. An escape artist of the first order, he got out of prison almost as fast as the courts put him there — until the security of Alcatraz, Atlanta Prison, and Central Prison in Raleigh finally contained him.

Gradually Watson "aged out" of his anger. He is now Program Supervisor for Polk Youth Center near Raleigh, working with youthful offenders. He has become

an unusually successful counselor, helping young men avoid the kind of world in which he lived most of his adult life. To his credit, Watson is not one of those naive "on-lookers" who blame all crimes on society. He recognizes the need for prisons and states that most prisoners are guilty of the crimes for which they have been convicted. More importantly, he believes criminals must decide for themselves to go straight. What he opposes is the cruelty in our prisons, and the belief of the general public that punishment, in and of itself, will lead to rehabilitation.

According to the publisher, everything in this book is true. I don't doubt this, though I am inclined to apply a dash of salt to some of the bravado. No matter, this is a fascinating and well written story. It is a testament to what anger, loneliness, cruelty, and punishment can do to the human spirit. Conversely, it shows what a little kindness and understanding can accomplish in the life of one man. Every policeman, judge, prison official, teacher, and social worker should read this book.

Peggy Hoffman assisted Watson in the preparation of the manuscript.

ARIZONA HUGHES. *Aunt Zona's Web*. (Banner Elk: The Puddingstone Press, 1976.)

This book, first published in 1962, has been revised and reissued by the Puddingstone Press at Lees-McRae College. Arizona Hughes was a school teacher who taught in mountain schools for over fifty years. This is not only the story of her life, it is the story of a region, its families, and its people. It is a story of a culture fast disappearing.

An interesting aspect of this book is how it came to be written. Though it is an autobiography, Mrs. Hughes did not actually write it herself. It was written by Thomas C. Chapman, a school teacher

from California. Chapman made contact with Mrs. Hughes while doing research on his family in the North Carolina mountains. He became so impressed with "Aunt Zona's" story that he urged her to write about it. Age prevented her from doing so, but she wrote a great number of letters to Chapman. Using these letters and writing in the first person, Chapman wrote her story. He has written it well.

The book is valuable as a contribution to the growing literature of the Appalachian region and its people.

Poets In The South: Conversations Within The Word. Vol. 1, No. 1, 1977.

This journal is published three times a year at the University of South Florida. Each issue features two poets who live and write in the South. The poets are selected by a rotating Board of Editors, composed of poets and editors who reside in the region. It is not the purpose of the journal to focus on "Southern Poetry"; the purpose is to feature the work of artists who live in this region.

In this issue the two poets featured are Van K. Brock of Florida State University and Ann Deagon of Guilford College. Selections of their work are included along with conversations and critical essays. The conversations and essays should be helpful to those who struggle to understand and appreciate modern poetry. Indirectly these pieces speak to the question of whether poetry requires an explanation, or is itself an explanation and therefore needs no further comment from the poet. The format is a good one; this journal is highly recommended to serious students of poetry.

Subscriptions are \$6.00 a year, or \$10.00 for two years. Correspondence should be addressed to: *Poets In The South*, Center For Writers, LET 141, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida 33620.

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