New

North Carolina Books

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This is a study of the career of Walter Hines Page. It is a successful biography; the research is vast and meticulous and the analysis is fair and sound.

Page saw his mission in life to be that of an emissary from the post Civil War South to the rest of the nation and, in his last years, as a spokesman for Great Britain to the United States during the First World War. Page’s outstanding qualities appear to have been great energy and (with some significant exceptions) the capacity to attract the admiration and loyalty of those with whom he dealt, whether in the world of education, journalism, or in public life as the American Ambassador to the Court of St. James.

In addition to its portrait of Page, the book is important because of the picture it provides of life in North Carolina in the last decades of the nineteenth century. It is also valuable because of its description of American journalism during the same period. Students of the Wilson Administration will find much of value here: glimpses of that great and complicated president, the oblique Colonel House, and other public figures, all admirably treated.

Some minor criticism can be made of Cooper’s style; there is some repetition, and his use of the “elegant variation” is distracting. Page is often referred to as “Wain”, “Page”, “Walter Hines Page”, “The Tar Heel”, “The North Carolinian”, and “The Ambassador”. I would have preferred “Page” for once and for all.

One last criticism seems to be in order. Cooper makes no reference to Colin Simpson’s study of the sinking of the Lusitania. Simpson shows that the ship’s naval escort was deliberately withdrawn shortly before the attack by the German submarine. This certainly explains why, hours before that event, both Sir Edward Grey and King George V, in separate conversations, raised the question with Page as to what America might do if the Lusitania were to be sunk. What appears in Cooper’s account as coincidence assumes a much darker color in Simpson’s book, a deliberate attempt on the part of the British to bring America into the war.

All university and college libraries should add this book to their collections. Public libraries that maintain collections in American diplomatic history should also order it.

Henry G. Hood, Jr.

Marilyn Gombosi, Assistant Director of the Moravian Music Foundation, is involved in the collecting, editing and preserving of music in the archives of Old Salem, a restored eighteenth century village now a part of the city of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. In this book she presents, with full realization of parts for instruments, the music believed to have been used in services on July 4, 1783 celebrating the end of the Revolutionary War. The author explains in a most interesting way how Friedrich Peter worked out the complete musical program, drawing on remembrances from 1783 Peace Festival that celebrated the end of the Seven Years War. She describes the presumed reasoning of Peter in adapting existing music and parts to a prescribed order of service (by order of the state), and presents the replication in beautiful music autography by Helen M. Jenner.

This work can be considered a rare book collection in one volume. The “solemn, sober stile” of the music is truly stayed on harmony that imparts “Gladness, Charity, and Benevolence.” Surely these musical collections will later appear in octavo form and will include reprints of Gombosi’s discussion of the musical traditions of the Moravian Church. The author’s musical “restoration” adheres to sound principles of research. It should be ordered by any North Carolina library that serves those who have an interest in the musical and cultural life of the eighteenth century.

Rosemarie Cooper


Very few people in North Carolina have heard of the Society of Cincinnati. And those who have heard the name most likely know little or nothing about the organization. This book (a limited edition of 1000 copies) is a history of this very old group of Americans. The Society was organized in the spring of 1783 on the banks of the Hudson River in New York. Its membership was restricted to officers of the thirteen Continental Lines that fought in the American Revolution. Its present membership consist of descendants of officers who fought in this conflict. The organization took its name from the Roman dictator, Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, who supposedly left his farm to defend Rome from agressors.

The North Carolina Society of the Cincinnati was organized in Hillsborough on October 25, 1783. This book traces the life of the North Carolina chapter from its founding, through its lean years, to its status today. It concentrates on the membership over the years — who they were, what they believed, what they accomplished in private and public affairs, and what they stand for today. According to Davis the Society is conservative, martial, nationalistic, aristocratic, elitist, and always patriotic. In short, it is a group of leaders, gentlemen who stand ready to promote and protect the tried and true values of American life. In his concluding assessment of the meaning of the Society Davis seems unnecessarily snippy toward those groups that question the motives of such organizations.

The book is carefully researched and well written. It is a worthwhile reference work for college and university libraries.
WILLIAM JOHNSTON HOGAN. Hunting- 
ton, Silversmiths 1763-1885. (Durham: 
ELLEN J. CRAIG-SCOTT. Life On The Eno. 
These two books are the first offerings 
of a new publishing house in Durham, the 
Sir Walter Press. The first volume is an 
account of a family of silversmiths, the Hun-
tingtons, that came to America from 
England in 1663. Members of this family 
practiced their craft in Connecticut, North 
Carolina and Alabama. The focus here is 
on the period when the family lived and 
worked in Hillsborough. The weight of this 
book is toward family history and 
genealogy rather than the art and 
business of the silversmith. Though there 
is some discussion of the craft and 
numerous illustrations of silver spoons, 
these seem incidental to the family story. 
It is worth mentioning that the metal cor-
nerstone plaque of Old East, the oldest 
building on the campus of the University at 
Chapel Hill, is the work of this family.
The second book, a limited edition, is a 
volume of ten short stories set in 
Hillsborough. They are quiet little stories 
of romantic love written in the style of an 
earlier day. Readers who are jaded by the 
realism of “total exposure fiction” will 
smirk at the simplicity of these stories. 
They are rather old-fashioned, but they 
have certain charm. The book will be of in-
terest to those who enjoy reading about 
life in and around Hillsborough.

ELIZABETH H. RAGAN. The Lineage Of 
The Amos Ragan Family. (Greensboro: 
The Quaker Collecton Of Guilford 
College, 1976).
Genealogy is a vital part of history. Yet 
family histories are rarely read except by 
family members or an occasional biographer or social historian. Most such 
studies are not really meant to be read; 
they are reference books. This volume is 
an exception to the rule; you can read it 
with some pleasure and profit. Though the 
focus is on the Ragan family, it contains 
much information about other North 
Carolina families in Guilford, Davidson 
and Rowan counties. It will be of value to 
anyone interested in the history of Quaker 
families in the central section of the state. 
The manuscript was edited by Herbert 
Poole.