

New North Carolina Books

Suzanne S. Levy,
Compiler

Michael Myerson. ***Nothing Could Be Finer***. New York: International Publishers, 1978. 245 pp. Cloth \$12.00, paper \$3.95.

This is a difficult book to review. It's possible to be very critical. For example, the work lacks something as basic as an index, and there is no bibliography. The typography is a disaster, and you may get splinters from the paper. The author's politics and division of the world into good guys and bad lead to simplistic statements and unsubstantiated conclusions. Little attempt is made to be objective; references, while not misquoted are often either taken out of context or come from questionable sources.

Nevertheless, the work presents a view of North Carolina not readily available. The author describes current events in this state as a result of years of domination of the state by business interests. Workers, the poor, and especially Blacks, according to Myerson, were all exploited in order to benefit the business interest which controlled the state. Myerson devastatingly attacks the state's educational, political, judicial and prison systems. Much of the book centers on the Wilmington 10 and Ben Chavis, arguing that their arrest, conviction, and long sentences were a result of a concentrated effort by the state to limit dissent.

This book presents a very critical, biased, and at times unsubstantiated examination of North Carolina. While it is unfortunate that the arguments are not stronger and less polemical, the book is recommended for all libraries in the state because it does present an alternative evaluation of North Carolina.

William Z. Schenck
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Awakenings: Writings and Recollections of Eastern North Carolina Women. Greenville, National Printing Company, 1978. 105 pp. \$3.00 (order from Dr. Sally Brett, English Department, Austin Building, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27834)

This book is a collection of six essays on Eastern North Carolina women by a class of junior level English students in Editing and Abstracting at East Carolina University. A vast majority of the information for this book came from primary sources in the Manuscripts Department of the University's Joyner Library. This collection of essays follows the same study of a select group of upper class North Carolina women from 1830-1930 as Anne Firor Scott's *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics*.

The essays begin with the education of wealthier young ladies in private academies for girls prior to the Civil War. The next period was Rebecca Pitchford Davis' life as an Eastern North Carolina planter's wife whose sons are fighting in the Civil War. (Rebecca is unfortunately misspelled throughout the essay). The next study covers the courtship of Della Barlow and Colonel Perry from 1860-1868. The editor did not indicate whether the couple ever married although they did in 1868. Dr. William E. Stephenson traced the changes in upper class North Carolina women through their participation in the End of the Century Book Club, formed in 1899. The club's history shows patterns that reflect social conservatism and allegiance to tradition that were characteristic of eastern North Carolina women. The fifth essay is a short study of the class of 1914 at East Carolina Teacher's Training School, Greenville, a school for training women teachers. This was the time when women were beginning to have a choice of a career or marriage or both. The last essay is a portrait of Johnetta Webb Spilman, eastern North Carolina politician who pioneered the movement of women in politics in North Carolina when women's role in politics was questioned by both men and women.

This little book is suitable for a public, college, or university library.

Marguerite Wiggins
East Carolina University

Taylor Lewis and Joanne Young. *The Hidden Treasure of Bath Town*. Bath, N. C.: Friends of Historic Bath, Inc., 1978. 72 pp. \$12.95 + tax. (order from Historic Bath, P. O. Box 124, Bath, N. C. 27808)

The town of Bath, North Carolina, was incorporated in 1705, making it the oldest town in the state. It was designed by historian and explorer John Lawson, and in the mid-eighteenth century it was the practical center of government for the colony. It was once home of the infamous pirate, Blackbeard; it is the location of the oldest still-active church in North Carolina, St. Thomas Church; and it was the seat of the first public library in the colony. All of these factors, plus the natural beauty of this small town on the coast, make it a good choice for a popular, descriptive, historical book with color photographs.

The only book about Bath currently available on the in-print market has been *Bath Town Guidebook* done by the North Carolina Division of Archives and History in 1977. This short (15-page) booklet is still a good basic history of the town for visitors; it is factual, accurate, and contains numerous illustrations of houses and furnishings in North Carolina's oldest town.

But those who want the facts plus lavish color photographs may be interested in a new publication by Taylor Lewis and Joanne Young titled *The Hidden Treasure of Bath Town*. The text is easy reading yet accurate, and the photographs are outstanding (though this reviewer believes that the natural beauty of Bath far exceeds the beauty portrayed by photographs of buildings or objects). Lewis and Young have chosen their photographs well, the book is artistically laid out, and the text is well-written and informative. It is a publication in which the Friends of Historic Bath can take pride, and it would be a worthy addition to public libraries across North Carolina.

Alice R. Cotten
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Norma Jean and Carole Darden. ***Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine: Recipes and Reminiscences of a Family.*** New York: Anchor Press, 1978. 288 pp. \$9.95.

Norma Jean and Carole Darden grew up in Wilson, North Carolina. They traveled the roads of North Carolina, Virginia, Alabama and Ohio, gathering family recipes, beauty concoctions, celebration menus, and memories from their paternal family (the Dardens), their maternal family (the Sampsons), and friends and acquaintances along the way.

Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine is a pilgrimage through family history which took the authors seven years to research and document. Not only will you reap a cookbook filled with recipes that were handed down from generation to generation but you will become intimately acquainted with the lives of the Darden and Sampson families through biographical sketches. The two families can boast of black professionals like pharmacists, doctors, lawyers, teachers, a child therapist, and an acclaimed fashion model as well as one grandmother who managed to be a pillar of both the Baptist and the Holiness Churches at the same time. A number of family photographs and line drawings by Doug Jamieson illustrate the text. This title is recommended for public libraries and college and university libraries with Afro-American collections.

Anita Booth
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts: A collection of Southern Furniture, Paintings, Ceramics, Textiles, and Metalware. Introduction, Frank L. Horton; text and design, Jan Garrett Hind. Winston-Salem: Old Salem, Inc., 1979. 96 pp. \$10.00, hardbound, \$7.50, softbound. (Order from Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Salem Station, Drawer F, Winston-Salem, NC 27108)

The Old Salem restored area in Winston-Salem is one of our state's greatest historical assets. The wealth of its holdings is exemplified within the walls of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts. A recently revised catalog of the museum's collection, therefore, should be very welcome to those interested in reminding themselves of the skilled craftsmanship of a pre-plastic society.

Frank L. Horton, founder and director of the museum, has contributed an informative overview of the collection, providing a needed perspective. He divides the large geographical area covered by the collection's holdings into three sections, the Chesapeake, the Carolina Low Country, and the Back Country, and summarizes the varying developments of the furniture and decorative arts of these regions. The predominantly rural and agrarian South came slowly to sophistication in furniture design and the purely ornamental aspects of life. But the strong influence of England, traditional arbiter of fashions for the early colonies, gradually filtered throughout the widespread South to be mixed with a new and vital American tradition. This American tradition was formed by many people with national traditions of their own and tempered by the resources and characteristics of a new land. The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts preserves some of the finest examples of this heritage.

The museum is organized as a collection of house interiors, each furnished to represent style periods between the late seventeenth and early

nineteenth centuries. The catalog reflects this ordering, being arranged chronologically with most rooms introduced by reconstructed sketches of the exteriors of the houses as they would have appeared to their original owners. A location is given for each house and, fittingly enough, most of the houses are North Carolina in origin. A handsome color plate illustrates every room, while many individual objects are studied in detailed views. The majority of these are black and white though even here we are given more color photographs than one might expect in these austere times. I especially appreciated the care throughout to keep the descriptive text near the photograph in question avoiding the tiresome flipping from photograph to object.

A very great asset is the writing style of Jan Garrett Hind who manages to convey much information and artistic detail in a relaxed and easy-flowing manner. This is not just a dry listing of dimensions and materials but an interesting look at a way of life reflected through the style of its surroundings. A prior knowledge of the field would be helpful but not necessary for many of the more specialized architectural and antique-trade terms can be deduced from context. Any general reader with an interest in learning about Southern craftsmanship would benefit from this work. All academic or public libraries with holdings in applied arts would find this a worthy addition to their collection.

Gene W. Leonardi
North Carolina Central University

F. Roy Johnson and E. Frank Stephenson, Jr. ***The Gatling Gun and the Flying Machine***. Murfreesboro, N. C.: Johnson Publishing Co., 1979. 160 pp., \$9.50.

"I would have made much more money if I had devoted myself to peace machinery instead of weapons of offense and defense," said Richard J. Gatling, inventor of the gun by which his name is world famous. That may be true, but his fame could scarcely have been more universal. This concise book traces the life of a North Carolina farmboy whose inventive genius raised him almost to the rank of an Edison.

Told in a breezy anecdotal style, laced with a number of oral sources, *The Gatling Gun and the Flying Machine* tells the story of a man who was courted by kings and czars, politicians and militarists, conservative businessmen and crackpots of every stripe, because of his ability to create a weapon of death, purposely made terrible because its inventor hoped, vainly, that by rendering war even more obscene, he might move mankind to abolish it.

Gatling was, however, a man not content with one creation. Like Edison, with whom he might be compared in innovative fertility, he kept the path of the Patent Office warm. Credited with almost half a hundred patents, Gatling devised everything from flush toilets (an unheard-of luxury in nineteenth-century America) to motorized plows and seed planters. He was an individual driven by hard work, curiosity, and a stubborn ingenuity—all the traits of the innovator not content with things as they are.

But there is a semi-comic and yet tragic side to all this: abruptly, in the second half of the book, we are told of Gatling's brother, James Henry, and his jealousy of the former's wealth and fame. He was determined to do something about it. Also possessed of an inventive mind, he decided to surpass all his brother's work with a truly spectacular achievement—he would fly! And

so, half a century before the Wright brothers, he labored with indifferent and humorous results on a contraption his neighbors call the 'Old Turkey Buzzard'. Most of them were convinced that he was quite mad, but also quite harmless. Yet, in many ways, he was theoretically on the right road. A bad temper and constant fighting with any and all ended his dream. An adversary, seeking what he deemed justice, murdered James Gatling. The book closes on this sober note: Where one man was able to turn his singular trait to reality, another was left with a shattered dream.

Neatly rounding out the book are a number of useful appendices dealing with the principals' homestead in Hertford County, N. C., their appearances and possessions. In addition to a good bibliography there is a useful list of oral sources. Except for the unfortunate use of brown ink which obscures the photographs, the book is well put together and its moderate price and popular, though by no means simplistic text, justify its inclusion in any public or college library.

Jeffrey T. Hicks
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Simon Baker. **Storms, People and Property in Coastal North Carolina.** Raleigh: UNC Sea Grant College Program, 1978. 82 pp. free. (order from UNC Sea Grant, 105 1911 Building, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27650)

The big question for coastal dwellers every summer is, Will this be the year for the hurricane? Many feel the North Carolina coast is overdue for another big hurricane. Those who have survived the ones in the past worry that increasing numbers of new coastal residents do not take the threat of a hurricane seriously enough.

For those who know and particularly for those who don't, Simon Baker has sifted through mountains of information available mainly through state and federal governmental sources and compiled a brief, non-technical book about hurricanes, cyclones and northeasters and how to survive them.

Roughly the first third of the book is devoted to a discussion of the nature of hurricanes. Most of the examples are illustrated by photos of North Carolina's experiences with hurricanes and their destruction. Dr. Baker has constructed charts that show occurrences of tropical cyclones on the North Carolina coast by earliest and latest dates, the number reaching the coast, the number of years between occurrences, and the probability of occurrence: all based on observations made from 1886-1970.

The second third of the book offers tips on how to survive a hurricane. Particularly useful are specific procedures on how to purify water and precautionary measures to be taken in food preparation. The text concludes with short chapters on housing construction, farming and boating precautions.

The final third of the book is comprised of appendices. Among them are the addresses and phone numbers of civil preparedness agencies in the coastal zone, a glossary of terms associated with hurricanes (e.g. the difference between a hurricane watch and hurricane warning), and even something for trivia fans: the list of Atlantic hurricane names for 1979 through 1983.

Most of the information in the book is not original and can be obtained from various government and published sources. The purpose of the book

however, is not necessarily to add new material to the wealth of hurricane information already available, but to "inform the reader of the nature and frequency of storms on North Carolina's coast and dangers associated with them." It accomplishes that end.

Deborah Babel

University of North Carolina at Wilmington

Sue Ellen Bridgers. **All Together Now**. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979. 238 pp. \$7.95.

Twelve year old Casey Flanagan's father is fighting in the Korean War. Her mother is busy with two jobs. Casey is sent to spend the summer with her grandparents in a small Carolina town.

It is an important "growing" time for Casey. Through her experiences with Dwayne, a thirty year old retarded man whose passion is baseball, with Pansy and Hazard married for the first time late in life, with her car racing uncle Taylor and his girl friend, and with her grandparents, Casey gets a profound lesson in responsibility, love and belonging.

Some younger readers may find the episodic style paradoxical; on the one hand it keeps the plot moving; on the other hand, Casey, as well as some of the dramatic tension are temporarily lost in the various points of view (i.e.: particularly that of Pansy and Hazard).

Sylva, North Carolina writer Sue Ellen Bridgers continues the literary promise she demonstrated in her first novel, *Home Before Dark*. Public and school libraries serving seventh through ninth graders will want to purchase *All Together Now*.

Gail Terwilliger

Cumberland County Public Library

Editor's Note: Because of a severe proofreading error, below is a correct copy of Mr. Powell's review which appeared in the previous issue.

Beth G. Crabtree and James W. Patton, editors, **"Journal of a Secesh Lady," The Diary of Catherine Ann Devereux Edmondston, 1860-1866**. Raleigh, NC: N. C. Division of Archives and History, 1979. 850 pp. \$28.00.

During the Civil War Catherine Ann Devereux Edmondston (1823-1875), a highly literate and active plantation wife of Halifax County, N. C., regularly kept a detailed diary in which she entered information about her daily activities together with a variety of unusual happenings. Her classical and contemporary reading provided additional subjects for comment as did her daily perusal of newspapers, particularly those from Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy. She followed the course of the war with great attention and in addition to reporting occurrences as she learned of them she also added her own comments. Her judgment of the leadership on both sides was incisive and time proved her to have been correct in many cases. Some wartime activity she also knew at first hand since much of Eastern North Carolina was occupied quite early in the war by Federal forces; raids and engagements were constantly on her mind and the firing of guns assaulted her ears on many occasions. She was responsible for concealing large numbers of bales of

cotton and other supplies from possible capture by the enemy and then, after the threat had passed, of recovering them. Drying cotton that had been wet in a sudden rain in the woods was a particularly difficult task.

The almost constant movement of family and friends involved in the war, the sending and receiving of messages, shortages and substitutes, and her concern for a Southern victory are mentioned throughout her journal. Mrs. Edmonston's wide range of interests, her devotion to relatives, friends, and slaves, her concern for the wounded and the survivors of the casualties, her love of gardening and of the land, and finally her despair as the war ended in defeat make her diary a work to be read as much more than a historical document. It is an intensely human document.

Historians at the local, state, and national levels may also benefit from her recording of so much that came to her attention. The adjustment made by the residents in occupied Elizabeth City, for example, or her account of what seems to have been a customary three-day mid-summer holiday granted slaves, or the use of United States treasury notes in the Confederacy in purchasing goods all provide interesting commentaries on the life of the people in the South at that time.

Mrs. Edmondston possessed a literary gift, not only in expressing herself so clearly in prose, but also in composing poems to commemorate a number of events. These she sometimes included in her diary. From time to time she also pasted in printed broadsides or newspaper clippings. These are included along with the transcription of her own writings. Her comments on many well-known people, as well as on a host of lesser people, make them all the more human.

Whether read for pleasure or for information, Mrs. Edmonston's journal will be both enjoyable and satisfying. It has the potential to become a classic and will surely take its place alongside a handful of others from other Southern states.

While this is a massive work, the index would have been better had it been more detailed. There is a great deal of interest in the book that the reader must ferret out for himself, and it is likely that much that is good will not be discovered by the casual researcher seeking information on some particular subject.

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