

New North Carolina Books

Suzanne S. Levy,
Compiler

Leona T. Hayes. **THE LOST TREASURE OF PEEP-EYE-COVE.** Illus. by Lee Budahl. Cullowhee, N.C.: Western Carolina University Mountain Heritage Center, 1978. 68 pp. \$3.00.

"All a mountain gal needs to know is housework, how to sew, milk, and raise a garden." But twelve year old Angy loves flowers and wants to learn more about them. Before he died Pa showed her about some of the common and scarce flowers in the mountain hills and valleys. On her way to school Angy overhears some children make fun of her flour sack dress and call her "poor mountain trash." Mountain folks don't cry but Angy, already mad with strict Aunt Polly, resolves to stay away from school to "show 'em." She and her dog Trouble start out for Peep-Eye Cove, where Indian pipes and lace slippers grow. It's a long way to the cove, and Angy and Trouble have various adventures along the way. Aunt Polly sends out a search party when Angy doesn't come home from school, but Angy is helping a university professor hunt for a flower that has not been seen for over a hundred years. The story has a happy ending for all concerned. Angy earns a reward and discovers that Aunt Polly and the community love her very much.

Mountain expressions blend with nicely turned descriptions of the area's plants and animals to give a good feeling of the story's setting. The main characters are well developed, and the story line moves from one episode to another, holding the reader's interest. The gentle illustrations heading each chapter are beautifully done. Appealing primarily to fourth to sixth grade girls, the book can be enjoyed by older readers, including adults. It is recommended for school and public libraries, as well as for collections of mountain literature.

Andrea P. Brown
St. Mary's College

William S. Powell, ed. **DICTIONARY OF NORTH CAROLINA BIOGRAPHY.** Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979. Volume 1, A-C. 477 pp. \$45.00. (A 20% discount is available on subscription orders)

Strike up the band! Break out the flags! The DNCB has begun to appear and the first volume is in hand. Physically it is handsome with a pleasing format and a cover halfway between Carolina and Duke blue. The print is small but quite legible; the two columns per page enhance the ease in reading.

William S. Powell who is "Mr. North Carolina History" has done a superb job of planning and editing the DNCB. Some seven hundred volunteers undertook serious research, including a fresh look at original sources whenever possible, and wrote the sketches. None of these writers was re-

bursed and a number of them traveled at home and abroad at their own expense. DNCB shows what a group of volunteers skillfully motivated (and surely "re-encouraged" to complete their tasks at strategic moments) can accomplish.

Inevitably, some biographies are better written than others, but the hand of the editor has been helpful in bringing the sketches to an acceptable standard. The editor's instructions for uniformity were well carried out. The result shows in the same vital information appearing for each biographee. Mr. Powell's decision that all sketches should contain "an account of the subject's role or contribution" done in an objective manner was an interesting one. It has added value to the work especially for those people who are not knowledgeable about North Carolina history. Just reading at random through this first volume, one becomes immersed in many facets of North Carolina history.

The first volume of DNCB highlights two important contributions which the set will make for users on every level. Very important is the inclusiveness of biographies. When the eighth and last volume is completed, information will have been provided on some four thousand North Carolinians through four centuries. No living person will be included. Mr. Powell drew up a preliminary list and circulated it to many North Carolinians—historians, librarians, archivists, writers, etc. Discussion ensued, names were added, deleted. The list was revised and further circulated. As a result, the volumes will contain biographies of a diversity of types. Not all of the subjects made helpful contributions—some were pirates, criminals—but the lives of all help to add to the understanding of the history of the state.

The second important contribution which should be highlighted is the inclusion of bibliographies at the end of each sketch. No one person could possibly have compiled these valuable "gold mines." Because each writer was charged with searching out material on his subject, all kinds of obscure sources are shown. Among these are items in manuscript collections, sketches in small and large newspapers, chapters or pages in unindexed books, and personal recollections.

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I agree that each book about North Carolina (or one of its citizens) should be in all North Carolina libraries.

Of course, I expect it to be an ethical publication and a worthy addition to North Carolina literature.

There is scarcely a library in North Carolina which will not want to add DNCB to its collection. Outside the state the volumes will be valuable in research, academic, and larger public libraries. Since North Carolina is a seed bed of the nation and the volumes will include many figures of the colonial and early state history with information about their forbears and descendants, genealogical collections all over the country should buy DNCB.

Congratulations to Bill Powell whose DNCB will surely be the most enduring and helpful of his many contributions to North Carolina.

Mary W. Canada
Duke University

Margaret Culkin Banning. **SUCH INTERESTING PEOPLE.** New York: Harper & Row, 1979. 233 pp. \$895.

SUCH INTERESTING PEOPLE is a nicely crafted, old-fashioned novel set in DeSoto (a close facsimile of Tryon), North Carolina. It centers on the conflict between DeSoto natives and nouveau Northern residents and on the burgeoning romance between Daphne, live-in "widow" of a famous rock musician, and Shore Lang, a blocked writer who comes to DeSoto for the summer. Its flaw, for me, is that Daphne, Shore and the others are a little too decent, too civilized, too sure to be really interesting, but that may well be its charm for others grown weary of novels with too much bite. **SUCH INTERESTING PEOPLE** has a timeless quality and may well endure long after more modern novels become dated. Recommended for public libraries.

Diane Strauss
University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

Stephen S. Birdsall, Shannon P. Hallman and Richard J. Kopec. **NORTH CAROLINA ATLAS OF THE ELDERLY.** Chapel Hill: Department of Geography, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1979. 83 pp. \$5.00.

Number 13 in the UNC Geography Department's Studies in Geography series, this collection of maps and data describes in some detail the elderly "condition" in North Carolina. Primarily statistical in nature this work covers the "number of the elderly," "Social networks: marital status and isolation," "work and the aged," "income and poverty," "mortality and health," and "perceptions of social problems." In each case maps that show the percentages by county accompany the various tables. In addition the five or six highest and lowest counties in each case are listed by rank.

This is a very well done publication filled with useful and relevant information. It is clear and well documented, each table and map being footnoted. While it has a good table of contents it does suffer from a lack of an index. That is a shame for such a detailed statistical source is enhanced with a good

index; otherwise much of the material can be very difficult to find. There is no doubt, however, that *NORTH CAROLINA ATLAS OF THE ELDERLY* fills a definite need and will be in demand by all those who work with or have an interest in the elderly. It is recommended for purchase by academic, social science and large public libraries.

Ridley R. Kessler, Jr.
University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

Ralph Dennis. *MacTAGGART'S WAR*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979. 378 pp. \$10.00.

England. 1940. *H.M.S. EMERALD* leaves an English port for Halifax, Nova Scotia with the wealth (in excess of \$500,000,000) of England, being shipped for safe storage to underground vaults in Canada. Duncan MacTaggart, an ex-soldier with the beginning of a "beer stomach," serves as the Bank of England's security person on the voyage across the Atlantic and on the subsequent train trip from Halifax to Montreal.

Fort Sam Belwin, North Carolina. 1940. Two American soldiers, Captain Johnny Whitman and Major Tom Renssler, bothered more by their lack of money and their debts than the war, continue to spend money, other people's money. Renssler, a 1930 West Point graduate, is visited by an old friend, a loose-talking British officer who knows about the shipment of gold aboard the *EMERALD*. Renssler reveals the secret to Whitman, an ex-Duke University football star, who soon devises a plan to rob the train as it moves to Montreal. First, he blackmails Renssler into joining him; then, he gathers a motley crew of ex-soldiers: Randy and Clark Gipson, brothers who know trains; Harry Churchman and Gunny Townsend, gun specialists; Vic Franks, a mechanic; and Richard Betts, an explosives expert.

The inevitable confrontation, MacTaggart and the King's Army against Whitman and his gang, occurs at Wingate Station in Canada. At this point, the weaknesses of the novel become extremely visible. The violence, prevalent throughout the novel, just becomes too much during the confrontation at Wingate Station. Dennis writes, "The first grenade exploded almost exactly under Lieutenant Foster's feet. It split him from crotch to neck like a freshly slaughtered beef." (p. 315) More vivid descriptions follow as nearly all the characters die violently.

The best quality of *MacTAGGART'S WAR* is the character development. Whitman, Renssler, and the other men in the gang are well-defined characters with natural desires and shortcomings. The men are wrong; they are murderers and robbers. But the characterizations provide excellent insight into the reasoning and the psychology of the men. The reader understands why Whitman will kill for the money, why Gunny Townsend needs this final fight, why Clark Gipson must not die, etc. Two characters, Duncan MacTaggart and Clark Gipson, are particularly well-developed and, ironically, the two possess the same characteristics.

Dennis, described only as a southerner who presently lives in Atlanta, is better known as the author of the Hardman novels about an Atlanta private detective. This novel should please those readers and other readers who are interested in novels of suspense and intrigue.

Timothy L. Coggins
North Carolina Central University

Lucile Noell Dula. **THE PELICAN GUIDE TO HILLSBOROUGH, HISTORIC ORANGE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA.** Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican Publishing Company, 1979. 124 pp. \$8.00

Lucile Dula's *PELICAN GUIDE TO HILLSBOROUGH* is primarily a guide to historic buildings and sites, but it is also a guide to the history, legends, and people of the town. Hillsborough deserves such a guide. Today it is important as the county seat of Orange County, but in the second half of the eighteenth century it was a trade and political center for the entire state. Situated at the intersection of major colonial roads and the meeting place for numerous General Assembly sessions in the 1780's, Hillsborough became known as "the capital of the Back Country." The book opens with a brief survey of the town's history.

The rest of the *PELICAN GUIDE TO HILLSBOROUGH* deals with houses, public buildings, and historic landmarks and sites. Dula separates the stories and tales from the physical and historical descriptions. The former make up Part I, "Telltale Houses." These range from stories of encounters with Northern soldiers in the Civil War to romantic memories of dancing on the walnut floor of Craig Manor's ballroom and claims of a ghost in the dining room of the Peter Browne Ruffin House. The latter (facts and physical descriptions) are covered in Part II, "A Walking Tour," a well-organized guide which includes clear map.

This separation into two parts is understandable, but unnecessary. It seems likely that a tourist looking at Ayr Mount would be just as interested to learn that Sherman's soldiers passed it by, believing it was a home for the insane, as to learn that the house has a lateral hall.

The numerous photographs, careful research, bibliography, and detailed index make the *PELICAN GUIDE TO HILLSBOROUGH* an outstanding example in the genre of guidebooks. It is recommended for any library collection of North Caroliniana and certainly for public libraries within a day's drive of Hillsborough.

Becky Stroud
University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

Frances Griffin. **LESS TIME FOR MEDDLING: A HISTORY OF SALEM ACADEMY AND COLLEGE, 1772-1866.** Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 1979. 311 pp. \$14.95.

Frances Griffin, author of two other books about Salem, has been Director of Information for Old Salem, Incorporated since 1966. This back

ground of interest and involvement well qualifies her to write the history of the first ninety-four years of the academy and college. An equally important factor to add is that she is not a Salem alumna. This would make her writing "less sentimental and more objective," according to Dale H. Gramley, who wrote the foreword of the book and served as the college's president from 1949-1971.

The author skillfully has combined her narrative style with the historical accuracy of the Moravians. The result is an interesting and informative introduction to the Moravian people and to the influence of European education on their early brethren and, in turn, their followers who settled in America. The book shows the academy and college, much like the settlement in which it was founded, move from within a contained community and emerge to meet "the needs of the society of which it is a part."

Many of the historical highlights cited in the book reflect current thinking. One particular concept is presented in the words of John Amos Comenius, an early Moravian and educator, who argued that

No reason can be shown why the female sex—should be kept from a knowledge of languages and wisdom. . . . The Lord God likewise employs them sometimes in large affairs (to manage people, lands, estates, and even whole kingdoms; also to give special advice to kings and princes; also to practice the art of medicine and to care for fellow human beings; even to function as prophets and to aid priests and bishops in giving instruction and chastisement). Why then should we merely dismiss them with the ABC and drive them away from books: Are we afraid of their

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meddling? The more we introduce them to mental occupations, the less time they will find for meddling, which comes from emptiness of mind (pp. 7-8).

Another early Moravian belief echoed today is that physical exercise is an important part of the education process. The boarding school required that the students exercise daily, "preferably outdoors," and the "prescribed exercise was a walk."

The book is recommended for public, secondary school, and academic libraries. The chapter headings, the photographs, and the index would aid a reader unfamiliar with the subject. The bibliography would provide the reader interested in additional information a chance to explore until a second volume on this topic can be published.

Martha McMurdo
University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

Lois Smathers Neal. **ABSTRACTS OF VITAL RECORDS FROM RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA NEWSPAPERS 1799-1819**. Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company, Publishers, 1979. 673 pp. \$35.00.

Lois Smathers Neal has forged a key which unlocks considerable primary information heretofore virtually buried in surviving issues of three Raleigh newspapers. Her **ABSTRACTS OF VITAL RECORDS FROM RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA NEWSPAPERS 1799-1819** provides easy access to substantive data contained in marriage and death notices (and occasionally news items considered proof of death) in the **RALEIGH REGISTER**, the **STAR**, and the **MINERVA**. Through her judicious gleanings and useful indexes Mrs. Neal, who in 1974 retired as Genealogical Reference Librarian at the North Carolina State Library, directs her reader to a variety of information about persons, places, institutions, events, and things—not just marriages and deaths.

Mrs. Neal chose wisely when she decided what and what not to include in her book. She ignored information concerning persons known nationally or internationally, and declined abstracting notices concerning northerners since adequate information concerning both categories exists. Her abstracts do include, in addition to the bare facts, information such as persons' relatives, occupations, and military service. Approximately half of the marriage abstracts contain information obtained from extant marriage bonds. Thus Mrs. Neal's book blossoms into a treasury of information about Raleigh, the state, and the South.

The book's organization and format also are excellent. The subjects of the abstracts are listed in alphabetical order by surname, then by given name. Husband's names are used in alphabetizing the marriage abstracts. The subjects' surnames, which are printed in all capital letters, appear at the left of each entry; their complete names are printed in capital letters in the body of the abstract. When Neal suspected the spelling of a name to be incorrect she supplied the preferred spelling in brackets. A variety of other devices

including abbreviations, ellipses, slashes, dashes, and underlinings (the use of which are explained in the introduction) clarify and shorten the entries, but not at the expense of completeness. A clear system of citations directs users to the column of the edition in which the desired information is located. (A spot check of citations proved all of them accurate.) If all three newspapers noted a particular marriage or death, three citations appear in the abstract. In the event of differing information, the deviations are noted.

The entries are numbered consecutively, and these numbers, rather than page numbers, are listed as points of referral in the subject and personal name indexes. Since the body of Neal's book serves as an index to the subjects of the notices, the name index does not repeat them.

Four additional features increase the usefulness of the book. Appendix I contains maps of North Carolina showing the counties in 1800 and in 1979, as well as a chart giving each county's date of creation, the county or territory from which it was organized, its county seat, and zip code. Calendars for each of the years covered in the abstracts comprise Appendix II, and a final appendix lists issues of the three papers which probably were printed but are missing.

A book for genealogists and historians alike, *ABSTRACTS OF VITAL RECORDS FROM RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA NEWSPAPERS 1799-1819* will find enthusiastic users in public and academic libraries. And, since Neal's work comprises volume one of a project to be carried through 1915, they will have something to look forward to.

Maurice C. York
East Carolina University

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