

New North Carolina Books

Suzanne S. Levy

Compiler

WEIRD TALES OF MARTIN COUNTY. Compiled by the "The Skewarkians" Junior Historian Club, Bear Grass School, Williamston, North Carolina, 1980. 77 pp. \$3.95. (Order from Elizabeth Roberson, Bear Grass School, Route 4, Williamston, NC 27892)

In the tradition of the Foxfire books, *Weird Tales of Martin County* was researched and developed by eighth grade students at Bear Grass School who interviewed older people in the community in an effort to locate and record local supernatural tales and superstitions. The result of their endeavors is a small book filled with local color and numerous black and white drawings and pictures. The first part of the book is devoted to the stories and legends of Martin County. These simple, well-told tales are amply illustrated and quite short (often less than a page in length). At the end of the book are lists of home cures and remedies as well as superstitions. (i.e., Never kill a frog because it will bring you bad luck).

Weird Tales of Martin County is the type of book which has appeal beyond the confines of local interest. In a time when many school classes or groups are becoming involved with local history projects, *Weird Tales* can serve as a model or incentive. Also, books about ghosts and other supernatural happenings are very popular with young readers. *Weird Tales of Martin County* will be a welcome addition to the shelves of any North Carolina library where interest in local history and/or the supernatural is found.

Dianne Kessler
Durham County Schools

Mimi Conway. **RISE GONNA RISE. A PORTRAIT OF SOUTHERN TEXTILE WORKERS.** Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1979. 228 pp. \$10.95; \$5.95 paper.

Careful readers of major North Carolina newspapers will understand the relevance of *Rise Gonna Rise*, for they are aware of the continuing conflicts between the J. P. Stevens Company and its employees. Mimi Conway, depending largely on the words of textile workers and other persons she interviewed, presents a vivid picture of the multiple afflictions of Stevens' workers in Roanoke Rapids, their struggle to unionize, and the sometimes shocking attempts of the company to thwart unionization.

Conway divides the book into eight parts that discuss Roanoke Rapids and its people, workers suffering from brown lung disease, the J. P. Stevens Company, the Textile Workers Union of America and its victory in Roanoke

Rapids, and other topics. The author's background as an investigative reporter is in evidence in each part, for she combines lively prose with appropriate quotes from her interviews. Most of the major sections comprise detailed studies of the mistreatment of specific workers and their efforts to obtain healthful working conditions, better pay, and reasonable retirement benefits. Forty-three striking photographs by Earl Dotter underscore Conway's points well.

Though an excellent piece of journalism, *Rise Gonna Rise* has several deficiencies. Conway lacks sound historical perspective, as occasional sentences, such as one on page twelve, reveal: "After the Civil War, he tried to farm again but could barely scrape out a living from the war-devastated land." The author also seems too eager to accept the statements of the persons she interviewed without checking their accuracy. Though each section is well written, the parts stand alone; smoother transitions would have improved the book. This indictment of the Southern textile industry should interest patrons of academic, public, and high school libraries.

Maurice C. York
East Carolina University

David Stick. **NORTH CAROLINA LIGHTHOUSES.** Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1980.

85 pp. \$6.00; \$2.50 paper; plus .50 postage and handling.

David Stick has given us a number of excellent books on the Outer Banks, among them *Graveyard of the Atlantic* and *The Cape Hatteras Seashore*. His most recent contribution is *North Carolina Lighthouses*, written for the Division of Archives and History.

Beginning with exploration of the North Carolina coast by Englishmen some 400 years ago, Mr. Stick chronologically recounts the efforts made to make sea travel and commerce along the North Carolina coast safer and navigationally more predictable. Interspersed with much factual material on the lighthouses, lightships, beacons, etc., that have guided mariners along our coast since 1795 when the Bald Head lighthouse was lit, Mr. Stick develops several personalities who shaped lighthouse history. One such person was Stephen Pleasanton, fifth auditor of the United States Treasury, who significantly improved the navigational aids along the coast, but who sometimes neglected to insure the usefulness of the site and the quality of the materials used. A number of well-chosen photographs and engravings highlight points in the text. The maps by Bill Ballard are quite helpful and the index is detailed.

North Carolina Lighthouses combines the fascination of the lore of the North Carolina coast with solid research and clear prose. It will prove useful and interesting to readers of all ages in school, public, and academic libraries.

Andrea P. Brown
St. Mary's College

Mary D. Beaty. **DAVIDSON, A HISTORY OF THE TOWN FROM 1835 UNTIL 1937.** Davidson, N. C.: Briarpatch Press, 1979. 213 pp. 12.50.

The town of Davidson and Davidson College were established at the same time, and they have grown together. Dr. Beaty, assistant director and reference librarian at the college, is a native of the town, and her book reflects both her affection for and knowledge of the place. To those with no attachment to Davidson her book will prove to be a fascinating mood piece, an account of a small Southern town where newcomers are accepted slowly and then taken to heart. Alumni of the college will surely find their memory jogged by the author's telling of fact and tradition associated with both college and town. Not surprisingly, this is a book useful for reference; it is carefully and logically arranged in chronological chapters with several more devoted to the development, house by house, in various sections of the town. The pictures and maps average not quite one per page and they are carefully coordinated with the text. Excellent paper, binding, type face, quality of illustrations, and index combine to make a handsome book, while carefully phrased prose and ten appendixes will delight the casual reader as well as the serious researcher.

Librarians should recommend this book to patrons who want to understand small town life in North Carolina and to would-be local historians in search of a model local history. And, of course, it should come to mind first when there is a call for information about the history of Davidson College.

William S. Powell
University of North Carolina
At Chapel Hill

Chatham Clark. **THE WAYWARD BALLOON: A TRUE STORY.** Illustrated by Selma M. Gibson. Elizabethtown, NC: River Hill House Press for the Bladen County Historical Society, 1979. 25 leaves. \$5.00 (Order from Box 205, Elizabethtown, NC 28337)

In 1912 a hot-air balloon rising above any county fair was a spectacle anticipated with fascination and delight. But at the Cumberland County Fair that year, the ascent produced fearful amazement instead and became sensational news. This occurred when James W. Smith, a Bladen County farmer, responded to a call for help in steadying the balloon. Its ropes entangled his foot just as a wind gust swept it aloft. The horrifying flight arced fifteen hundred feet above the North Carolina countryside. When it finally settle nearer earth, Mr. Smith leaped free, apparently unharmed. Within a day or so, however, he suffered lameness, trauma, and a painful loss of privacy that proved to be grounds for a court battle which rivaled the balloon flight itself as a spectacle. *The Wayward Balloon* is this true story.

In the book's closing pages is a sort of epilogue describing an aerial recovery technique developed for military rescues and analogous in some ways to James Smith's balloon ride. News of the accident may indeed have contributed to the inventor's rescue concept, but no evidence is given to substantiate it in this book. These final paragraphs distract the reader and do not convince him. Free of ingenious theories, the story is an exciting account, full of human difficulty faced by a man with the kind of determination often attributed to the Southern farmer.

The author, Chatham Clark, is a former North Carolina state legislator who has been active in recording Bladen County history and in helping to preserve its historical sites. For *The Wayward Balloon*, a tale of more gravity than the title

indicates, Mr. Clark consulted newspapers, court records, family files, witnesses to the event, and relatives of James Smith. His charmingly illustrated, small paperbound book is a simply styled narrative that should appeal to both young and adult readers of short stories and local history.

*Tucker M. Schechter
University of North Carolina
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Brown, Louis A. **THE SALISBURY PRISON: A CASE STUDY OF CONFEDERATE MILITARY PRISONS 1861-1865.** Wendell, NC: Avera Press, 1980. 204 pp. \$15.00, plus \$1.00 postage and handling; 25 percent discount for libraries. (Order from Louis A. Brown, Mitchell Community College, West Broad Street, Statesville, NC 28677)

It will come as a surprise to many North Carolinians to find out that a Confederate prison camp actually existed in this state. It will be an even bigger surprise to find out that the Salisbury Prison had a higher mortality rate than the infamous Andersonville. In fact, the author states that . . . "the death rate at the Salisbury prison from October until February of 1865 was the highest of any prison for the same length of time, either North or South."

Mr. Brown reasons that all Confederate military prisons during the War between the States were subjected to the same regulations; they were all established in a hasty manner; all suffered toward the end of the war because of lack of food and other necessities, and conditions became worse because of the cessation of prison exchange and a starving South. It is thus his contention that the Salisbury Prison can be used as a case study of all Confederate military prisons.

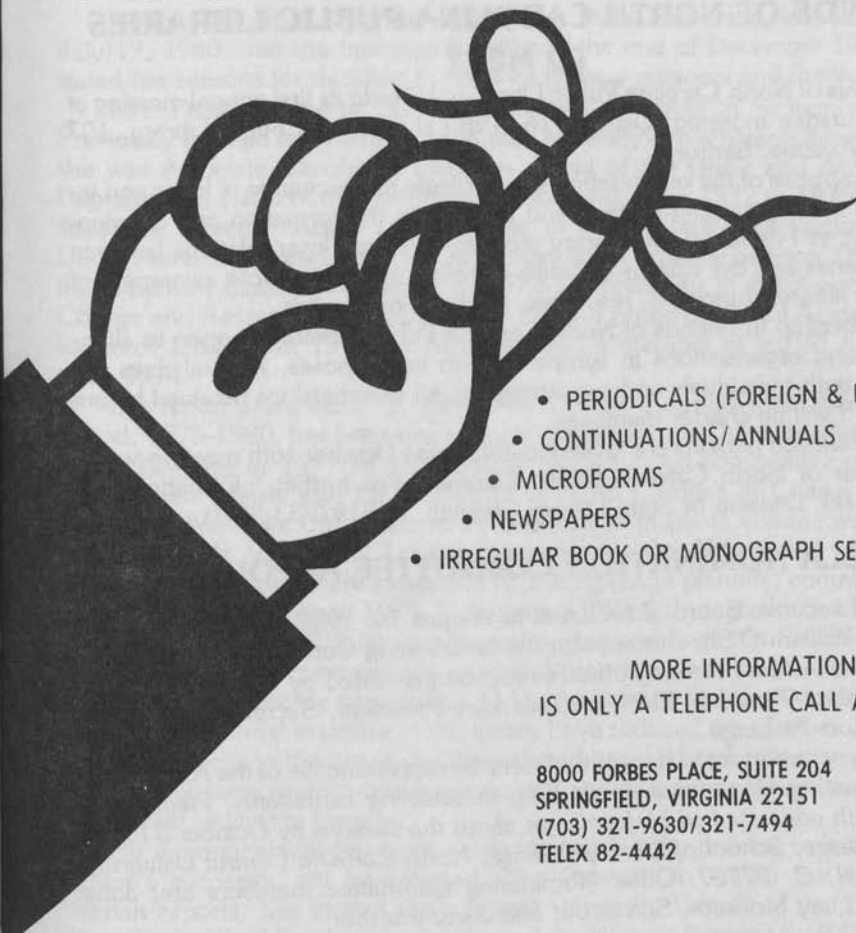
The story of the Salisbury Prison is not only well told by Mr. Brown, but it is also well researched and documented. In great detail he covers such topics as escapes, hunger, deaths, and the reactions of prisoners and local townspeople to the prison.

Of the 15,000 prisoners who passed through the prison during its existence, Mr. Brown estimates that 8,951 prisoners were paroled and exchanged, 2,100 prisoners defected to the Confederacy, and 300 managed to escape. Less than 4,000 died from various causes, of which diarrhea and pneumonia were the most common killers.

This is a fascinating book and is recommended to all libraries with North Carolina collections and/or Civil War collections. It is illustrated, indexed, and has an excellent bibliography.

*Ridley R. Kessler, Jr.
University of North Carolina
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