

New North Carolina Books

Maurice C. York
Compiler

Evelyn Adelaide Johnson. ***History of Elizabeth City State University: A Story of Survival***. New York: Vantage Press, 1980. 277 pp. \$12.50.

This is a reliable and well-written account of Elizabeth City State University. Johnson, who vividly describes Elizabeth City's geographically rustic and isolated setting, reveals that the school's development from the State Colored Normal School at Elizabeth City in 1891 to its status as Elizabeth City State University has been a challenge. Hugh Cale, a politician, businessman, and humanitarian, was instrumental in the establishment of this institution for the education of his people. The administration of Peter W. Moore began on January 4, 1892, with twenty-three students from seven counties and a budget of \$900.00. "He believed that good citizens were knowledgeable, refined, cultured, worthy of respect, and understanding." Finances, student recruitment and retention, faculty and staff, and expansion of curriculum were continuous problems of this institution. Through the Great Depression and other crises, the institution endured these problems. Its transition from the past to the present has been tempestuous, and its future, according to Johnson, will involve "new challenges for those who must direct the various paths in which Elizabeth City State University must tread to survive in tomorrow's world."

This book is recommended for academic and public libraries whose clientele desire a survey about black higher education in North Carolina. It will please the demands of alumni for a history of their alma mater. The references and notes are good. There is no index. There are pictures of sites and buildings, trustees, administrators, students, and alumni.

Evelyn A. Johnson, a music professor who served this institution for over forty years, has written an informative and well-researched history of Elizabeth City State University.

James R. Jarrell
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

David N. Durant. ***Raleigh's Lost Colony***. New York: Atheneum, 1981. 188 pp. \$12.95.

In just a few years North Carolina will be sponsoring the observance of the 400th anniversary of Sir Walter Raleigh's attempts to establish an English colony on Roanoke Island. This book, therefore, comes at a good time.

Queen Elizabeth in 1584 granted a charter to Raleigh authorizing him to discover and settle land in the New World. He immediately sent the first of several expeditions to America, and it brought back glowing reports of land and climate, native inhabitants, and produce. This was followed by a colony of over a hundred men under Ralph Lane as governor; they remained on Roanoke Island almost a year. The men explored widely, collecting samples of all kinds. John White painted watercolor pictures of natives, their villages, and of wildlife; and White and Thomas Harriot made maps. Returning hastily to England when an opportunity presented itself, the colonists disappointed Raleigh in that they did not establish a permanent settlement. Nevertheless, the next year he sent still another colony, this time including not only men, but also women and children. It was this group which composed the now-famous "Lost Colony."

Drawing his material from the surviving contemporary records, Durant has related all of the known facts about all of these ventures. It is an account of brave men and women, some who took foolish risks, and others whose intellectual curiosity contributed to England's understanding of America. Although these events have been related many times before, Durant ties them all together very nicely in a most readable fashion. His sympathetic treatment of native Americans is in keeping with current scholarship. Indians are depicted fairly, and their role in the events between 1584 and 1609 is judiciously related.

For those who want a concise yet accurate telling of earliest English activity in America, this book is ideal. With a school-level essay contest likely to develop as one form of the observance of the 400th anniversary of the events depicted here, it undoubtedly will be much in demand. Its detailed chronology, one appendix listing names of colonists, and another discussing the possible site of the colonies on Roanoke Island, all offer a source of answers to reference questions. There are illustrations of some of the John White watercolors and early engravings of some of the people mentioned, maps, and chapter notes as well as a careful index.

The format is attractive, the book is well bound, and it is easy to hold for reading in comfort. North Carolina libraries should have several copies and librarians and others may discover that this is a good book for giving.

William S. Powell

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Carole Marsh. *The Secret of Somerset Place*. Tryon, N.C.: Gallopade Publishing Group, 1980. 121 pp. \$3.95 paper.

Breathing life into history and weaving it into the fabric of contemporary fiction, while maintaining the integrity of historical fact, is a demanding art. It is especially demanding when writing for young people, who generally require a great deal of what-happened-next action to keep them interested. *The Secret of Somerset Place* is the second volume in a series of children's mysteries set in

historic sites in North Carolina that attempts to achieve this melding of fact and fiction.

The historic site in this story is Somerset Place—a restored coastal plantation in a remote area of eastern North Carolina near Lake Phelps. Legend has it that Somerset is “the haunt of beasts.” When an important paper that would affect the future of the lake disappears, everyone begins to wonder if The Beast still roams. Mysterious clues appear, and four adventurous children go on a beast hunt through the old house and grounds that eventually leads them to uncover The Secret of Somerset Place.

The plot is plausible, with fast-breaking action; and the characters generally are well drawn and believable. If the dialogue is sometimes a little strained and pedantic, it is compensated for by the author’s success in imparting a great deal of historical fact along with a feel for the history of the area. All in all, the book does a good job of pointing out to young readers the influence of history on their past and future. It is implicit in the story that history is made by real people and that there is plenty of mystery in life for those who seek it.

The illustrations are black and white photographs of local children taken at the historical location. While they are effective in lending a note of realism to the story, they are limited in scope, and one wonders why some shots of “the real Somerset” were not included.

This book is suitable for both school and public libraries. It probably will have the greatest appeal for the nine to eleven age group. Because its relatively short chapters always end on a cliff-hanging note, it is an ideal book to read aloud to a history class (and a must for any group planning a trip to Somerset).

The History Mystery Books series so far includes *The Missing Head Mystery* (set in historic Bath) and *The Secret of Somerset Place*; coming soon is *The Haunt of Hope Plantation*. In combining historic fact and contemporary fiction, the creators of the series hope to “instill an enthusiasm for history and a belief in historic preservation in our young people.” It is a series worth collecting.

Hansy Jones

Sheppard Memorial Library
Greenville

Guy Benton Johnson and Guion Griffis Johnson. ***Research in Service to Society: The First Fifty Years of the Institute for Research in Social Science at the University of North Carolina.*** Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980. 442 pp. \$20.00

In 1924 when the Institute for Research in Social Science opened its doors, it inaugurated a new era for the university at which it was housed and the region it sought to serve. Among the nine individuals who received the first appointments as research assistants at the institute were the authors of this study. The Johnsons, he a Kenan Professor Emeritus of sociology at the University of North

Carolina at Chapel Hill and distinguished cultural anthropologist, and she a noted historian, former university professor, and social activist, have produced a concise but comprehensive account of the evolution of the structure of the institute and of the research interests and activities of its affiliates.

Flavored with the Johnsons' recollections of their participation in the institute's affairs, this is yet an extensively researched and documented history. The authors have made use of the IRSS archives, several sets of personal papers, records of research both published and unpublished, and interviews with persons connected in many ways with the facility. *Research in Service to Society* is more than the story of one pioneer organization. When the institute was founded, sociology, the discipline of its founder, Howard W. Odum, was equivalent to socialism in many circles, and the early investigations of such controversial subjects as the roots of black culture and the quality of life in the mill village fueled such charges. The story of Howard Odum's struggle to secure the larger community's support and understanding of his quest to expose the problems, identify the distinctive features, and facilitate the improvement of the region is also the story of the evolution of academic freedom and the emergence of a truly "new" South. The institute's later involvement in research in such areas as social policy, behavioral science, urban living, and health care contributed to the development of the Research Triangle Institute and Center for Urban and Regional Studies and expanded the realm of research in the social sciences.

This is an informative and interesting study. It does, however, suffer from one of the flaws all too common to institutional histories. In places it is more a list—of projects, publications, and accomplishments—than a narrative. Yet the Johnsons have produced more than a commemorative volume; this is a study for readers with an interest in the growth of the social sciences and the university at Chapel Hill and in the history of the state and the region as well.

Katherine F. Martin

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Joann Carlson Wyatt. *Through the Patience of Job*. Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1981. 107 pp. \$9.95. (Order from Wyatt-Quarles Seed Company, P.O. Box 2131, Raleigh, N.C. 27602)

If you believe, as does Dr. H. G. Jones, that "virtually all history begins with local events of people," you will agree that locating, preserving, and publishing local records, both public and private, are desirable goals. The results may vary a good deal in quality, and many compilations may never get beyond the vertical files of the local public or community college library; but much of value can be saved and made accessible. Mrs. Wyatt's book, while limited in scope, contributes to our understanding of a place and a period. It is the history of a family as well as of a business.

Job P. Wyatt went into partnership in 1881 with Philip Taylor and M. T. Norris in Raleigh. The company began as a retail operation, selling "heavy groceries"—food, shoes, overalls, plows, hardware." As the firm grew and prospered, Wyatt bought out his partners and brought in his brothers. By 1907 his sons began joining the company, which became Job P. Wyatt & Sons in 1911. Wyatt had started emphasizing the wholesale side of the business before his unexpected death the same year. His sons continued by increasing the inventory of hardware and seeds, while phasing out clothing and groceries. Expansion of the business after World War II led to its division into two separate firms in 1955: Wyatt-Quarles Seed Company and Job P. Wyatt & Sons, a purely wholesale operation.

One of the most interesting parts of the story concerns the difficult years following the First World War. Wyatt & Sons was unfavorably affected by the agricultural depression of the twenties, then was hit even harder by the Great Depression of the thirties. The efforts of the firm to survive required new ideas and probably reflected the experiences of many small businesses in those trying times.

The book is divided into short chapters with an effort made at the beginning of each chapter to relate the activities of the company to current events. Because Job P. Wyatt & Sons almost from its beginning was a family business, family activities—marriages, births, deaths—for four generations are covered also. The style is straightforward and readable. The numerous illustrations, including early advertisements, bills of sale, and portraits, are well chosen and clear. Footnotes and bibliography are lacking, but the book reflects Mrs. Wyatt's access to both business and family papers. The 1881 map of Raleigh on the endpapers locates early family homes and business sites.

Any collection emphasizing the history of Raleigh or the history of North Carolina businesses should have a copy.

Anne R. Correll
Forsyth County Public Library

Reynolds Price. *The Source of Light*. New York: Atheneum, 1981. 318 pp. \$13.95.

The Source of Light continues the story begun in Price's 1975 novel, *The Surface of Earth*. Price has narrowed the scope of his earlier family saga to focus on two characters, Rob Mayfield and his son, Hutch, whose lives we encounter about a decade later.

Hutch, who now is twenty-five, is leaving his teaching position in Virginia (at the same college, incidentally, where Price studied in the mid-fifties). Seeing himself as an "aging boy," he leaves in search of geographic and psychological

distance from his complex relationship with his father and his mother, who died at his birth, and from his strong sense—even burden—of family. His search is also for the “space” to find himself as a poet and as an adult. He leaves behind Ann, with whom he has been involved for seven years, to wait patiently.

The novel, set in 1955, follows Hutch through his year at Oxford, his travels through England, and his musings on himself—the latter primarily shared through his letters to Ann and his family.

Rob has seen his son off to Oxford without telling Hutch that he is dying of lung cancer. As Hutch goes about his life in England, Rob prepares himself for imminent death by remembering—remembering his life and family. He leaves his thoughts in letters to Hutch.

Hutch returns home to North Carolina to be with his father shortly before his death. Still uncertain about himself and his future, Hutch returns to England with a new realization of the importance of his family to him. He leaves Ann, who is not a very fully realized or interesting character, with a rift in their relationship that may never be healed.

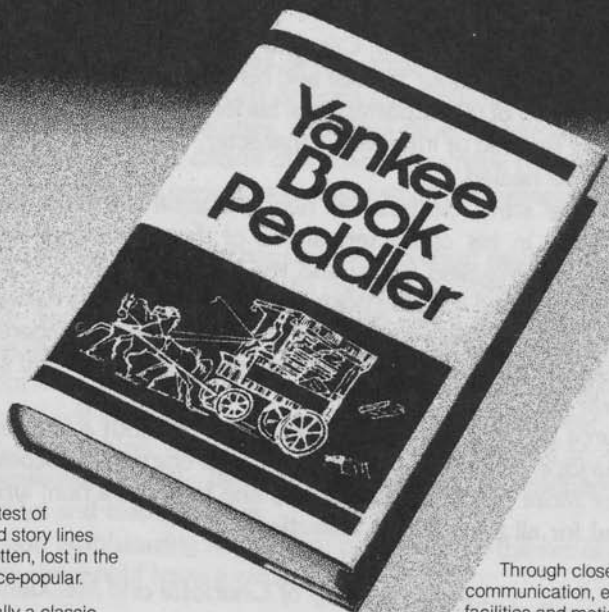
Although the story centers on two characters, Price's prose style is particularly strong in his characterizations of the interesting elderly women connected with the Mayfield family and the men with whom Hutch becomes involved while in England. He also possesses a very real ability to delineate a time and place in the South. These strengths in the novel help to compensate for what can be at times the very tiresome self-examinations of an overly self-absorbed twenty-five-year-old.

The Source of Light can be enjoyably read without a familiarity with the earlier *The Surface of Earth*. But reading this new one would encourage a reader to go back for more of the Mayfield family and for Price's rich, lyric prose. It is recommended for all adult fiction collections.

Alice Peery

Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County

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